More stores are adopting sensory-friendly hours

Sephora is latest to adjust in-store atmosphere. Here's what it means for shoppers. **In Money**

Mahomes explains success behind speedy recovery

Column: Chiefs QB's comeback from knee injury is both physical and mental feat. **In Sports**

PAUL MORIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Fallon shakes up late-night television

A man of many hats, and many guests, host says he feels some responsibility to carry late-night into next generation. **In Life**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | $3 | THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2026

In negotiations, President Donald Trump often employs a strategy he learned dealing in New York real estate. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

The art of the bluff? How Trump gets his way

Extraordinary demands often lead to lesser wins

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Call it the art of the bluff.

Bombing Iran back to the Stone Age. Threatening to double the cost of Chinese imports. Filing multibillion-dollar lawsuits.

President Donald Trump storms ahead when embarking on a new policy or seeking to intimidate an adversary. But agreements often come after he trims his sails.

"In the trade space, Trump's strategy is always maximalist at first, very public, very much trying to get everyone to overreact and then settling for what he actually wanted."
Scott Lincicome
Cato Institute

The commander-in-chief called Iranian leaders "very smart people, very good negotiators" after hammering out a framework for peace that later fell apart. He touted a "fantastic" trade deal that came after meeting with the "great leader," China's President Xi Jinping. And he settled lawsuits for fractions of a percent of what he'd demanded – or for the promise of avoiding tax audits.

It's a strategy Trump learned in the bare-knuckle world of New York real estate development.

"I went in and asked for the world – for an unprecedented tax abatement – on the assumption that even if I got cut back, the break might still be sufficient," Trump wrote in his 1987 book "Trump: The Art of the Deal." "In a funny way, it was like a high stakes poker game in which neither side has very strong cards so both are forced to bluff."

Here's a look at how he's deployed the approach as president.

Trump's approach on Iran

Trump's comments on Iran have ranged from bellicose to complimentary.

See TRUMP DEALS, Page 4A

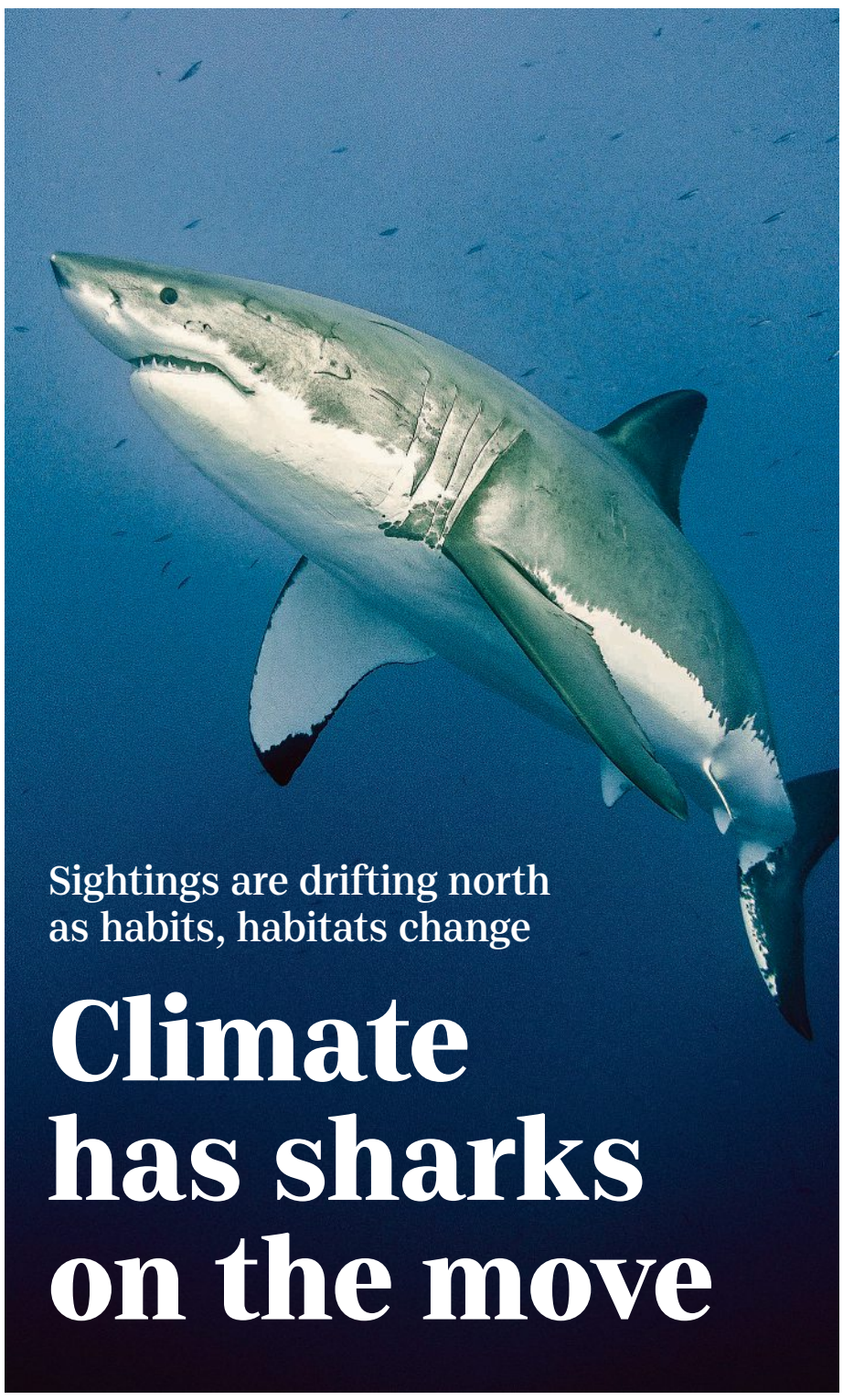
31

0 89505 04005 6

PLEASE RECYCLE

©COPYRIGHT 2026
USA TODAY,
A division of
USA TODAY Co., Inc.

HOME DELIVERY
1-800-872-0001, USATODAYSERVICE.COM



A great white, king of the deep. RAMÓN CARRETERO/GETTY IMAGES

Sightings are drifting north as habits, habitats change

Climate has sharks on the move

Janet Loehrke USA TODAY

As interest in sharks ramps up amid Discovery Channel's Shark Week, which runs through Saturday, Aug. 1, two studies have offered new insights into how sharks are changing their behavior and habitats. • Researchers have found that rising ocean temperatures are reshaping where sharks live and travel. Some species are expanding their range farther north along the East Coast, while others, such as great white sharks, use the Gulf of America, also known as the Gulf of Mexico, as an important winter habitat. • The oceans have experienced historic warming over the past decade, soaking up more than 90% of the surplus heat accumulating in Earth's climate, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

So does that mean Americans will see more sharks along our coastlines?

Not necessarily. You may not see more sharks overall, but you could see them in places where they were once less common.

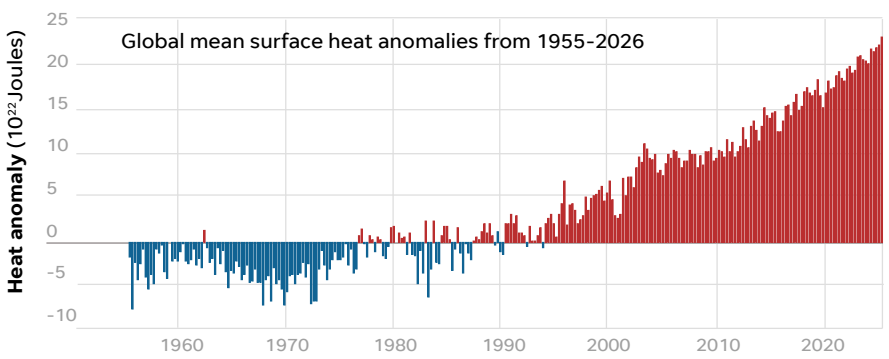
Shannon Barry, a researcher in the Department of Ocean Engineering and Marine Sciences at the Florida Institute of Technology and lead author of a study published in April in the journal Marine Ecology Progress Series, seems to agree. "As we see ocean temperatures increasing, especially as you move northward along the U.S. Atlantic coast, these near-shore habitats that bull sharks use for nursery sites are moving into the temperature range preferred by juveniles."

Shark sightings are popping up in regions the animals don't normally visit as they adjust to

See SHARKS, Page 6A

Warming ocean waters

Since the mid-1990s, global ocean temperatures have consistently been above the 1955-2006 average, as shown by the red bars.



NOTE Data is for the first 1/2 mile of ocean heat and is displayed in 3-month intervals for each year.
SOURCE NOAA; GRAPHIC Janet Loehrke/USA TODAY

Fauci dodges questions on COVID

He pleads the Fifth in contentious hearing

Bart Jansen, Joey Garrison and Erin Mansfield
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Dr. Anthony Fauci, a chief architect of the U.S. response to the COVID-19 pandemic, refused to answer Senate questions July 29 about his role during that era, invoking his Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination as lawmakers threatened him with criminal prosecution.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, accused Fauci of lying to Congress about the possibility the virus originated from a Chinese lab and the government's response to the pandemic.

Fauci, who was head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases under seven presidents, appeared under subpoena before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs.

He consistently refused to answer questions in a hearing that became so heated that Paul, chair of the committee, threatened to pursue criminal charges of obstruction against Fauci. Paul also booted one of his lawyers from the room for sitting next to him at the witness table.

See FAUCI, Page 4A

Darline Graham, front, and her family watch as Sen. Lindsey Graham's casket leaves the Capitol on July 28. MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/POOL VIA GETTY IMAGES

Graham, a 'true American original,' given final farewells

Bart Jansen, Zac Anderson, Joey Garrison and Francesca Chambers
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump eulogized Sen. Lindsey Graham as a "giant of the United States Senate" and a "true American original" with a "magnetic personality" at a memorial service at Washington National Cathedral.

The South Carolina Republican, who died unexpectedly July 11 at age 71, was a tireless public servant and a fiery advocate for his causes, whether defending Ukraine or fighting to confirm Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, Trump said.

See GRAHAM, Page 2A

Senate votes to advance Russia sanctions package

Legislation, inspired by Sen. Graham, cleared with bipartisan support.

Online: Visit usatoday.com for more coverage of Graham's funeral services.

Clayton confirmed to lead U.S. intelligence

Party-line vote stems tumult over post

Zac Anderson
USA TODAY

The Senate confirmed U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton as director of national intelligence in a party-line vote, approving President Donald Trump's pick to permanently lead the nation's spy agencies after backlash to his interim choice.

Clayton was confirmed July 28 by a 51-47 vote after months of turmoil around the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

"Jay is outstanding in every way, and will do a spectacular job as Director!" Trump wrote on social media after the vote.

Tulsi Gabbard announced in May that she was resigning as DNI and Trump tapped housing official Bill Pulte to lead the office on an interim basis, elevating a close ally with no experience in intelligence operations. Pulte faced bipartisan criticism of his qualifications for the intelligence job.

Jay Clayton, a U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, was confirmed July 28 as director of national intelligence. REUTERS FILE

While Clayton also has has relatively few national security credentials compared with his DNI predecessors, he oversees the Justice Department's office in the Southern District of New York, which handles cases related to national security threats and is DOJ's largest field office with more than 220 prosecutors. He is also a former chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Clayton attracted attention during his confirmation hearing for refusing to say who won the 2020 election. Trump lost the 2020 race to former President Joe Biden but has continued to push claims that the election was stolen.

"I'm not going to engage in the theater," Clayton said when pressed by Sen. Jon Ossoff, D-Georgia, on 2020.

Sen. Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat who serves as vice chair of the Intelligence Committee, said in a news release after Clayton's confirmation that he was initially "encouraged" by his nomination but "came away from his confirmation process with serious reservations about whether he would be willing to stand up to political pressure when it matters most."

"Now that he has been confirmed, I sincerely hope he proves those concerns unfounded, because the Intelligence Community deserves steadier leadership than it has received in recent months," Warner added.

Clayton will take over an office that Pulte has been downsizing.

The acting DNI announced multiple rounds of layoffs on social media, writing on July 28 that the office had been cut by 30%.

Consternation over Pulte's appointment caused the House of Representatives on June 11 to block the renewal of a key government surveillance law – Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA.

Contributing: Zachary Schermele, Josh Meyer

Senate OKs Russia sanctions package in Graham's honor

His sister, colleagues approve bipartisan bill

Francesca Chambers and Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly voted to advance a Russia sanctions package inspired by the late South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, hours after a funeral service for the Republican lawmaker in Washington that Ukraine's president attended.

The legislation easily cleared a procedural vote – the first of several hurdles before it can become law – with bipartisan support in an 86-12 vote. Eleven Democrats and one Republican, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, voted against the legislation.

Graham's sister Darline, who was appointed to fill his seat, is a lead sponsor of the bill, which was renamed the Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia Act of 2026.

"There is no greater way to honor Senator Graham's legacy than to move forward with this bipartisan agreement," Darline Graham and a bipartisan group of senators supporting the bill said in a joint statement before the vote.

Graham was a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its war against Russia and said he had secured President Donald Trump's backing for a version of the bill before his sudden death from an aortic tear.

The legislation provides the president with new authority to sanction Russian officials, foreign nationals and financial institutions affiliated with the country's war machine. It further authorizes Trump to put a 500% tariff on Russian imports and a tariff of up to 100% on top buyers of Moscow's oil, petroleum and natural gas. The bill also gives Trump more power to punish ships that skirt sanctions on Russian energy, its so-called shadow fleet.

"This legislation is designed to cut off Vladimir Putin's most important resource in his war against Ukraine: his money," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-New Hampshire, a cosponsor of the bill, said on the Senate floor.

The vote July 28 was largely symbolic, with the Senate about to leave town on Aug. 7 for a month. The chamber will have to vote on the legislation several more times for it to officially pass the Senate.

Then the legislation must clear the House, which is away until Aug. 31, before it can be presented to Trump. In June, the House overrode Republican leadership to pass its own version of a sanctions and Ukraine aid package.

The Democrats who opposed the sanctions package said they were concerned about tariff provisions that would delegate too much authority to Trump.

"In effect, this would be a blanket delegation of congressional tariff authority to the executive," Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vermont, said on the Senate floor.

The White House told USA TODAY that Trump is supporting the Senate bill, which also extends sanctions on Iran.

After a closed-door sit-down Tuesday with Trump at the White House, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went up to Capitol Hill for a bipartisan meeting with senators. He then went up to watch them cast their votes, sitting at one point in between Sen. John Barrasso, the majority whip, and Sen. Roger Wicker, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Zelenskyy was one of three world leaders who came to the United States to attend Graham's funeral at the Washington National Cathedral.

In a "Fox & Friends" interview on July 28, Trump said Graham was militant in his support for Ukraine. Zelenskyy called him a "true friend" of the nation in a social media post that thanked the United States "for its firm support" during the country's more than four-year war to beat back Russia's invasion.

Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, that has shown little signs of relenting, despite diplomatic efforts by the Trump administration to broker a deal with both nations that could bring the conflict to an end. A summit Trump hosted for Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, followed by a visit by Zelenskyy and European leaders to Washington, failed to yield progress last August.

Graham

Continued from Page 1A

Additional services were held for Graham on July 29 in Columbia, South Carolina. He will be buried in Pickens County, where he was born.

"He was a tough cookie, but he was beautiful," Trump said in a rare extemporaneous moment in his 14-minute address July 28 in Washington. "He was a force of nature and I will miss him greatly."

Kavanaugh, most of Trump's Cabinet and numerous lawmakers of both parties attended in an illustration of Graham's ability to listen to and work with anyone. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy were there for the invitation-only service, a testimony to his lasting influence on American foreign policy.

Netanyahu and Zelenskyy each met privately with Trump earlier in the day. "Both meetings were positive and productive!" White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on social media.

The Israeli leader said ahead of the meeting that the two would discuss Iran "first and foremost." His goal was "to safeguard our security and also to expand the circle of peace around us." Zelenskyy was scheduled to also meet with a bipartisan group of senators.

Graham was a central figure in Congress over more than three decades in the House and Senate, perennially in the middle of complex debates over immigration and budgeting from his roles leading the judiciary and budget committees.

He also served 33 years in uniform as a lawyer in the Air Force, the Air National Guard and the reserves. Leavitt announced on social media that a South Carolina military base, Joint Base Charleston, would be renamed Joint Base Lindsey Graham, according to a Charleston Post and Courier story she posted.

Graham "never saw a war that he didn't like," Trump said in the eulogy. "But he wanted it for the good of our country."

The senator rose from a small town in rural South Carolina to become "a constant fixture of American politics at the highest level," Trump said.

"Nothing of consequence" happened in Washington without Graham knowing about it, and "nothing of significance happened anywhere in the world" without Graham having a

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham's casket sits in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda with a military honor guard July 28 for a congressional tribute service. NATHAN HOWARD/POOL VIA GETTY IMAGES

view on it, Trump said.

Graham's defense of Kavanaugh at the justice's fiery confirmation hearing was "one of the greatest moments the Senate has ever seen," Trump said as Kavanaugh looked on from the pews.

The president remembered the early years of his relationship with the senator, when they were at odds, to say the least. He said he should not have given out Graham's personal cell phone number when they were fierce rivals in the 2016 presidential race.

But "it was Lindsey who had the last laugh because while I blew up his phone all for one day, we became great friends, and Lindsey did not stop calling me for the next 10 years," he said.

"There was truly nobody like Lindsey Graham," Trump said.

Fox News host Sean Hannity and Graham's niece, Emillie Boggs Roberts, spoke as well in deeply affectionate addresses that also poked fun at Graham's self-promotion, love of gossip and terrible driving.

Hannity called Graham a "force of nature" who kept a busy travel schedule, saying "nobody visited more war zones" or met with "more active-duty troops." He pushed back against characterizations of him as a warmonger: "He wanted every region, every country in the region on that path to peace."

Hannity, a Christian like Graham, imagined the senator was decorating his "mansion in heaven" like Mar-a-Lago: "It may even be a little bigger. He may have more gold. And I wouldn't be surprised if he added one big beautiful ballroom and an arch somewhere on the property because he would want to obviously duplicate his dearest friend in life: you, Mr. President."

Roberts joked that Graham was always there for his family – unless they needed help with manual labor. As for his driving: "Those of you who did not have the privilege of riding with Lindsey Graham, consider yourself blessed. In all seriousness, nothing was happening to me on his watch, and I believe that to my core – we all did."

Earlier in the day, senators, representatives and Vice President JD Vance spoke about Graham at an emotional ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda that left some in tears as friends and colleagues recalled his tenacity in public debate and his good humor.

As the flag-draped casket arrived, borne by a military honor guard and preceded by music from the U.S. Army Brass Quintet, Sen. Darline Graham, who was appointed to serve out her brother's term, dabbed her nose with a handkerchief. Sen. Katie Britt, R-Alabama, appeared to be sobbing as she stood at the casket.

Though Graham wasn't big in stature, he had an "attitude to him" that made him loom large, Vance said at the Rotunda ceremony.

Vance remembered Graham for his humor, charm and personal touch, remembering how he would walk into the Senate chamber and work the room, slapping people on the back.

He recalled Graham making him laugh so hard it hurt while campaigning for a Senate seat and then supporting his pet railway legislation despite the two having clashed ferociously over a funding bill for Ukraine.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, said Graham worked tirelessly to advance nominations as head of the Judiciary Committee. He was a fierce defender of Ukraine and of ending abortion, fighting what he saw as injustice in both cases, Thune said.

But despite dealing with serious issues, Thune said, he was also the first guest lawmakers would call for dinners. "No one was more capable of cracking up a room," Thune said. "The conversation and the laughs always flowed at any meal where Lindsey Graham was present."

The garrulous Graham maintained relationships across the aisle, and his ability to work with people who disagreed with him was a defining aspect of his approach, said Rep. Sheri Biggs, R-South Carolina.

"He believed that conversations matter," she said. "He believed that showing up mattered. And he believed that leadership meant finding a way forward, even when the path was complicated."

Contributing: Erin Mansfield, Emily R. Condon and Zachary Schermele

USA TODAY

Volume 44, No. 225

Customer service
To view important information related to your subscription, visit **aboutyoursubscription.usatoday.com**. You can also manage your subscription at **account.usatoday.com.**
Contact USA TODAY for questions or to report issues call 1-800-872-0001.
Operating hours are: Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. EST

Full access print and digital subscriptions
Subscribe and save today by visiting subscribe.usatoday.com

Contact us
Customer Service 1-800-872-0001
Newsroom ..... 703-854-3400, ext. 5
Classified advertising 1-800-397-0070
National, regional advertising 703-854-3400

Corrections and clarifications
Our goal is to promptly correct errors. Contact Standards Editor Michael McCarter at accuracy@ usatoday.com to report a mistake. Describe the error, where you saw it, the date, page number or the URL.

Postal information
USA TODAY, ISSN 0734-7456, is published daily except for Saturday, Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Observed), Christmas (Observed) and New Years Day (Observed), by USA TODAY Media Corp. (fka Gannett Media Corp.), 1152 15th St NW STE 700, Washington D.C., 20005-1766. Periodicals Postage at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2); NON-POSTAL ONE AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Please send address corrections to USA Today, Customer Service, 401 W Main St #600 Louisville KY 40202.

USA TODAY CO.

Double execution is carried out in Florida

First in 60 years highlights state's push

Amanda Lee Myers
USA TODAY

Florida has put to death two inmates in what's now the state's first double execution in more than 60 years amid an aggressive death penalty push by Gov. Ron DeSantis.

James Duckett, a 68-year-old former police officer convicted of killing an 11-year-old girl in 1987, was executed by lethal injection at 1:19 p.m. ET on July 28.

About five hours later, Florida executed Dominick Occhicone at 6:13 p.m. ET for the murder of his ex-fiancée's parents in 1986. At 80 years old, Occhicone became the second-oldest inmate ever executed in the United States and the oldest inmate ever executed in Florida, which is putting more elderly prisoners to death than any other state in the nation.

Tuesday also marks the first time since 1964 that Florida has executed two inmates on the same day, according to an execution database by the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center. The last time any state executed two inmates in one day was in 2017 in Arkansas, according to the nonprofit.

Florida's rare double execution comes amid an aggressive push by DeSantis to put more inmates to death than the state ever has before. Of the 66 inmates executed in the United States since January 2025, Florida has carried out 31 of them – 47% – including Duckett's and Occhicone's, according to an analysis by USA TODAY. Since the start of this year, Florida has carried out 63% of the executions in the United States.

DeSantis has said he wants to give closure to families who have waited for justice sometimes longer than four decades.

But the Republican's actions are drawing increasing criticism from death penalty opponents and observers who say the governor is being motivated by political ambition before the 2028 presidential election and is "increasingly treating executions as routine instruments of political power," according to a recent statement from Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.

The governor's office hasn't responded to a request for comment from USA TODAY about the allegations of political motives.

Here's what you need to know about Duckett's and Occhicone's crimes and more about what is going on in Florida.

Dorothy McAbee fights back tears during a news conference after her daughter's murderer, James Duckett, was executed at the Florida State Prison on July 28. ALICIA DEVINE/USA TODAY NETWORK

James Duckett, left, and Dominick Occhicone both were executed in Florida on July 28. PROVIDED BY FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

What was James Duckett convicted of?

On May 11, 1987, 11-year-old Teresa Mae McAbee walked to a local convenience store to buy a pencil at around 10 p.m. in Mascotte, Florida, a rural city just west of Orlando that had fewer than 2,000 residents at the time.

James "Jimmy" Duckett, a 29-year-old rookie cop, was on patrol for the Mascotte Police Department. The married father of two sons was making his regular rounds when he spotted Teresa talking with a 16-year-old boy outside the store, according to court records.

Duckett has always maintained that he talked to Teresa and the teen, telling each to go home. But the boy and his uncle later said that Duckett put Teresa in his patrol car and drove off.

Teresa's mother arrived at the Circle K around 11 p.m., looking for her daughter. The store clerk told her that Teresa may have gone with Duckett, and the mother began searching the area. When she couldn't find Teresa, she contacted the police and later filed a missing persons report with the only officer on patrol at the time: Duckett.

The next morning, less than a mile from the convenience store, a fisherman found Teresa's body in Knight Lake. A medical examiner later found that she had been raped and strangled, and was still alive when her attacker drowned her. Bodily fluid, presumably from the killer, was found on her underwear – DNA that was saved.

Duckett became a suspect when a sheriff's investigator, Sgt. Chuck Johnson, thought the officer was acting nervous at the scene of the body recovery, "was not curious about the death," and told a "rehearsed-sounding story" about his interaction with Teresa and the events of the night before.

Duckett was charged with murder five months later. He was convicted and sentenced to death.

Duckett was supposed to be executed in March but won a rare temporary reprieve from the Florida Supreme Court pending new DNA testing. The tests were inconclusive, Duckett's reprieve expired July 11 and DeSantis rescheduled his execution in a death warrant signed July 14.

It was the last of many decades of delays for Teresa's family.

After witnessing Duckett's execution on July 28, Teresa's mother was able to get out one sentence before she began uncontrollably sobbing.

"I've been waiting 40 years to have him dead," Dorothy Tula said in a quavering voice.

Her sister, Shirley Lancaster, rubbed Tula's shoulders and continued to speak on behalf of her family, saying that "the state let him live too damn long."

"She was only 11," Lancaster said. "We've lived all this time without that baby. … Maybe she'd have been the next doctor. Maybe she'd have been the next president, you never know. But we never got the chance to find that out because this bastard took her away from us."

What was Dominick Anthony Occhicone Jr. convicted of?

In the early morning hours of June 10, 1986, an angry Dominick Anthony Occhicone Jr. went to the home of his ex-fiancée, Anita Gerrity, in the coastal community of Holiday, Florida, about 30 miles northwest of Tampa, according to court records.

As Occhicone knocked on windows and doors, he was confronted by Gerrity's 66-year-old father, Raymon Artzner. According to court records, Occhicone smiled at Artzner as he shot him dead, then ran into the house and fatally shot Gerrity's 62-year-old mother, Martha Artzner. Gerrity and her 10-year-old daughter were able to escape.

At trial, Occhicone's attorneys argued that he was so drunk and filled with jealousy and rage that night that he was temporarily insane. Later, after Occhicone was found guilty of both murders, his attorneys argued that a life sentence was more appropriate, telling jurors that "prison life is so hard on people, that they don't live until they're 92," according to an archived news report in the Tampa Tribune.

The jury voted 7-5 to sentence him to death and a judge agreed.

In 1997, 11 years after the murders, the son of the victims told the Tribune that he was frustrated with the delays in the execution.

"It's frustrating," Jim Artzner told the paper. "Justice has not been completed. … It has gone on for so long. When is it going to end?"

That was 31 years ago.

On July 28 after witnessing Occhicone's execution, the Artzners' loved ones told reporters that it was "the end of a long and painful journey."

"The years since June 10, 1986, have been filed with sleepless nights, empty chairs at family gatherings, and those one-on-one conversations that were lost," they said in a statement. "We have missed birthdays, milestones, and simple everyday joys that were stolen from us. The pain and grief is always there, it never goes away."

They went on to say that Occhicone's execution doesn't erase their pain, "but it does close a door and end a chapter in our lives that has just lingered for far too long."

What is happening in Florida?

Since January 2025, Florida has become the busiest state in the nation for executions. So far this year, the Sunshine State has executed more inmates than all other states combined. Florida has put 12 inmates to death, including Duckett. Texas, Oklahoma and Arizona have executed seven inmates combined.

In 2025 and so far this year, six states have executed 25 inmates who were at least 62 years old, including Duckett and Occhicone, according to Death Penalty Information Center data analyzed by USA TODAY. Eighteen of them were in Florida, or 72%.

DeSantis is driving the increase in executions in Florida. He not only has signed more death warrants than any other governor in the state's history, he signed legislation in 2023 that added the death penalty as a possible punishment for people convicted of sex crimes against children. He also signed a law in 2025 that broadly expanded the state's execution methods to include anything "not deemed unconstitutional."

For death penalty critics and observers, the double execution is par for the course. They question why the state wanted to execute a "sickly" 80-year-old man who had a litany of ailments and argued that more time was needed to analyze the DNA in Duckett's case.

"Gov. DeSantis's secretive, self-serving pursuit of a record-setting number of executions ignores the trauma that carrying out two executions in a single day will inflict on prison staff," Robin Maher, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, previously told USA TODAY. "His rush to kill an elderly 80-year-old man and a man who may be innocent only proves the reckless disregard with which he is making these decisions."

DeSantis recently told ProPublica that meeting with the loved ones of victims reinforced his determination to see old death sentences carried out.

"There's a saying: Justice delayed is justice denied," DeSantis said. "We're doing it to be able to bring justice to the victims' families."

Contributing: Alicia Devine, Tallahassee Democrat

Judge dismisses lawsuit over Trump's religious panel

Faith groups had filed over lack of diversity

BrieAnna J. Frank
USA TODAY

A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit that sought to have the court declare President Donald Trump's Religious Liberty Commission to have an illegal lack of diversity through having only Christian and Jewish members.

A multifaith group of organizations – Interfaith Alliance, Muslims for Progressive Values, the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund and Hindus for Human Rights – sued the administration in February over what they said was an illegal lack of religious and ideological diversity on the commission. Americans United for Separation of Church and State and Democracy Forward represented the groups.

The groups also accused the commission of disregarding "basic transparency requirements" that allow the public "to follow and understand the Commission's work." The administration notified the court in late April that it had publicly posted commission records, including transcripts, meeting minutes and hearing recommendations. Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said at the time that the files "only confirm for all to see the fatal flaw at the core of this commission: its Christian Nationalist bias."

The administration has rejected such notions. In response to the dismissal, White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers called the suit "meritless, and a poor attempt to thwart the Trump Administration's effort to promote religious liberty" in a statement to USA TODAY on July 28. "The Religious Liberty Commission's important work will continue, and President Trump will always vigorously defend religious liberty for all Americans," Rogers said.

Laser said the groups behind the lawsuit were "disappointed" by the dismissal and "respectfully and strongly disagree that the Religious Liberty Commission's members represent a fair balance of viewpoints."

"We are reviewing next steps with our co-counsel and plaintiffs," she said in a statement to USA TODAY.

The Rev. Paul Raushenbush, president and CEO of Interfaith Alliance, said in a statement to USA TODAY July 29 that the dismissal "wrongly ignored that the Commission privileges one narrow religious and ideological view."

"Even so, the transparency we earned for the American people is a meaningful victory for everyone who believes religious freedom belongs to all, not just a favored few," he said. "Interfaith Alliance and our multifaith partners will keep standing up to Christian nationalism wherever it threatens our democracy."

Judge says commission is fairly balanced, made records available

Trump established the commission through an order in May 2025. The group was tasked with publishing a report on the history and state of religious liberty in the nation by July 4, 2026.

The group included Protestant, Catholic and Jewish members but no Muslims or members of other minority religions. The February lawsuit accused the commission's members of pushing "the view that America is a 'Judeo-Christian' nation with limited, if any restrictions, on infusing their religious values into government."

The lawsuit pointed to the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires such groups to be "fairly balanced in terms of the points of view represented."

U.S. District Judge John P. Cronan, whom Trump appointed in 2020, wrote July 27 that the law does not clearly define what constitutes "fair balance" and that courts have historically been "'highly deferential' in reviewing a committee's composition."

"Under this deferential standard, the RLC's membership is fairly balanced," Cronan wrote. "Its members include workers in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, have widely varying life experiences – from a former host of a popular television show to a State Lieutenant Governor, are religious leaders as well as rank-and-file congregants, and – to the extent that it matters – encompass adherents of at least five different religions."

In response to the plaintiffs' argument that having only Christian and Jewish commissioners is unlawful, Cronan said commissioners' religious beliefs are "not relevant to the Commission's function." He also disagreed with "the premise that there is a single 'Judeo-Christian' viewpoint."

"Given the wide diversity of Christian and Jewish beliefs, there is no reason to think that an Evangelical member would 'balance out' a Catholic member any less than a Buddhist member would," Cronan's opinion said.

He also rejected the allegations related to transparency requirements, saying the law does not have a deadline for making records available.

USA TODAY's coverage of First Amendment issues is funded through a collaboration between the Freedom Forum and Journalism Funding Partners. Funders do not provide editorial input.

Trump deals

Continued from Page 1A

Trump demanded "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER!" in a March 6 post. He said in an April 1 post "we are blasting Iran into oblivion or, as they say, back to the Stone Ages!!!" And he said "A whole civilization will die tonight" in an April 7 post.

U.S. and Iranian officials signed a framework June 17 to stop the bombing, halt the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports and reopen the Strait of Hormuz to commercial shipping in exchange for Tehran's commitment not to develop nuclear weapons.

"They're very smart people, very good negotiators," Trump said.

But after Iran resumed firing on commercial ships in the strait, Trump returned to the harsh talk. He told reporters at a NATO summit that Iranian leaders are "scum" and "sick people."

"Honestly, they haven't seen anything yet," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on July 21. "We've been nice."

From 'extremely hostile' to 'very friendly' on talks with China

As the American eagle battled the Chinese dragon over trade, Trump imposed tariffs on imports from China last year that threatened to reach 157% against China's "extraordinarily aggressive" and "extremely hostile" position.

"I don't think that's sustainable for them," he said.

But Trump repeatedly postponed or withdrew tariffs as he negotiated a trade agreement in October with the United States' third-largest trading partner.

"I think it was a very friendly meeting," Trump said in reaching an agreement with Xi. "It was a good meeting for two very large, powerful countries. That's the way we should get along with a large powerful country."

Despite the haggling, the government is collecting much more in tariffs under Trump. The average tariff rate for all imports is about 9%, according to the Tax Policy Center. Tariffs averaged 2.5% in 2024, the year before Trump's second term, according to the Tax Foundation.

"I think the president has viewed tariffs as an opening salvo," Dave Townsend, a partner at Dorsey & Whitney representing foreign clients in trade litigation, told USA TODAY.

Scott Lincicome, vice president of general economics at the libertarian Cato Institute, said threatening higher amounts and eventually settling for less still left tariffs nearly four times higher than when Trump returned to office.

"In the trade space, Trump's strategy is always maximalist at first, very public, very much trying to get everyone to overreact and then settling for what he actually wanted and having the temperature actually go down because everyone expected the worst," Lincicome told USA TODAY. "There is some measure of relief when the worst doesn't happen, even if you're worse off."

Trump softens comments on China meddling in U.S. elections

Another clash arose July 16, when Trump released a batch of declassified intelligence documents and accused China of trying to undermine the 2020 election. But a few days later, he downplayed the threat and said both countries meddle with each other.

President Donald Trump shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 15 during a visit to Beijing. In 2025, Trump imposed a series of tariffs on China as the two countries worked toward a trade agreement. EVAN VUCCI/REUTERS

Trump accused China of stealing 220 million voter files from states across the country in what he called "the largest compromise of election data in history," although election experts said states sell the information.

Trump also said during that prime-time televised speech that China sought to influence U.S. business leaders to "turn against" the president during his first term and paid reporters to write negatively about him.

"The Chinese government wanted [the] U.S. president to lose the next election, and the reason they wanted me to lose is because they knew I was wise to them," Trump said.

But when reporters asked July 21 about consequences for China, Trump downplayed the threat by suggesting the U.S. government does similar things to them.

"Well, we'll talk to them about it. It took place a long time ago," Trump told reporters the Oval Office. "I think China's maybe a little bit different today than it was then. But look, they do things. And we do things to them. I'll be honest. We do things to them, too. It's not a one-way street."

Trump shrugs off Supreme Court losses after noting significance

Trump worked the refs at the Supreme Court for his priorities of imposing tariffs and restricting birthright citizenship, but then shrugged off losses in both cases.

Trump speaks about election security on July 16 from the White House. He harshly criticized China for election meddling in the speech but later downplayed the threat. SAUL LOEB VIA REUTERS

Trump said in December that a ruling against him in the tariffs case would be the "biggest threat in history to United States National Security."

"WE'RE SCREWED!" if the court overturns the tariffs, Trump added in a social media post Jan. 12.

But after the Feb. 20 decision, Trump acknowledged other paths to tariffs.

"Yes, I have another way of doing Tariffs, but it is far slower, and more laborious than what was just determined, in a close decision, to be 'illegal' or 'unconstitutional,' with three powerful, and highly accurate, dissents!" he said on social media May 10.

In another major loss at the high court, Trump argued the country "cannot live with the shackles of Birthright Citizenship," which he said wasn't economical or sustainable in a social media post June 11. He reinforced the importance of the case by becoming the first sitting president to attend an oral argument.

But after the court ruled against him on the final day of its term June 30, Trump said another decision released the same day was more important because it confirmed his power to remove the heads of independent agencies.

Regarding the birthright citizenship defeat, "we can easily make it up in Congress through Legislation," Trump said in a social media post June 30.

Billion-dollar lawsuits settled for millions but still 'jaw-dropping'

Trump, who frequently went to court before being elected president, hasn't let his day job keep him from filing multibillion-dollar lawsuits. But in several high-profile cases he settled for millions – less than two-tenths of a percent of his demands – or an agreement to avoid future tax investigations.

For example, Trump filed a lawsuit against ABC in March 2024 after George Stephanopoulos inaccurately said he was found liable for raping columnist E. Jean Carroll in her civil case against him. ABC agreed in December 2024 to pay $15 million to Trump's presidential library and $1 million for his legal fees.

Trump filed a $10 billion lawsuit in October 2024 over the editing of a "60 Minutes" interview on CBS with his Democratic opponent, Kamala Harris. He settled in July 2025 for $16 million from CBS owner Paramount.

Trump has also sued The Wall Street Journal for $10 billion for writing about his relationship with accused sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein and The New York Times for $15 billion for "disparaging articles" during the 2024 campaign. But those cases are unresolved.

Lee Levine, a lawyer who has represented media clients for 35 years, said naming a big price in a lawsuit is common and not unique to Trump.

"Lawyers always put in their complaints outrageous dollar figures, usually just a function of how tired their fingers get in typing zeros at their computers," Levine said.

The settlements have been wins for Trump even though the numbers are a fraction of what he sought.

But he said the multimillion-dollar settlements, which came before the cases were tested in court, reflected timidity of the media companies seeking to avoid getting on the president's wrong side.

"The amounts of those settlements standing on their own are jaw-dropping," Levine said.

Trump, his two older sons and his namesake business filed a $10 billion lawsuit in January against the Internal Revenue Service after a contractor leaked their tax returns to reporters. The lawsuit said the Trumps suffered "reputational and financial harm, public embarrassment" and "unfairly tarnished their business reputations."

Trump, who oversees the IRS as president, reached an agreement in May that the IRS wouldn't audit him for past tax liabilities. The agreement also envisioned a nearly $1.8 billion fund to repay people investigated by the Justice Department, but Trump dropped the provision after a public outcry and a judge is reviewing the agreement.

"This lawsuit was not brought to vindicate rights; it was brought to manipulate the judicial process," U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams wrote.

Settling for a single rather than trying for home run

Some of Trump's lawsuits have yielded results. Tariffs are being recalibrated. But the evaluation of his foreign policy remains unresolved because the Iran war grinds on.

In "The Art of the Deal," Trump wrote about not getting too greedy in financial negotiations.

"If you go for a home run on every pitch, you're also going to strike out a lot," Trump wrote. "I try never to leave myself too exposed, even if it means sometimes settling for a triple, a double, or even, on rare occasions, a single."

But Trump's unpredictability in foreign affairs can be unsettling to the other side because it leaves negotiators uncertain whether the president will uphold his side of a deal, according to Trita Parsi, executive vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank that emphasizes military restraint and diplomatic engagement.

"Part of it is that he's coming out with this bluster and then settles for something else," Parsi told USA TODAY. "It can cause [foreign leaders] to be more cautious. It can cause them to be fearful of what he may do."

Fauci

Continued from Page 1A

Fauci, 85, was the public face of the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He retired from federal government work at the end of 2022.

Former President Joe Biden preemptively pardoned Fauci to shield him from criminal investigation, but Paul has said that if Fauci perjures himself, the pardon for past actions won't protect him.

Reading from a one-page statement at the start of the hearing, Fauci said he would be invoking his Fifth Amendment right because the hearing had one purpose: to entrap him into saying something that could be used against him in court.

He said Paul had an "unhinged obsession" with prosecuting him. He cited "repeated slanderous comments about me" and Paul's recent release of Fauci's diary "aimed at embarrassing and intimidating me."

"The only conclusion I can reach is that the sole reason he is calling me before this committee is to get me to say something – anything – that could vindicate his repeated public pledges that I end up, in his words, 'behind bars,' " Fauci said.

Paul said he denied Fauci's assertion of privilege and directed him to answer questions anyway.

When Fauci continued to refuse to testify, Paul said the committee would pursue charges against him.

"It's against the law to obstruct an investigation of Congress," Paul said. "There will be repercussions."

He accused Fauci of covering up legitimate questions about federal funding to the Wuhan Institute of Virology and research on whether the coronavirus could have come from animals or from a lab experiment.

Paul said that the funding for experimental research at the lab was "one of the worst public health decisions" in history and that Fauci needed to "come clean" and ask forgiveness from the American people who suffered as the coronavirus spread to pandemic proportions.

He peppered Fauci with questions about mpox research, the possible CIA transfer of money to his agency, and research into how avian flu jumped to mammals. Paul focused on whether the benefits of the research into how viruses are spread were worth the risk.

"On the advice of counsel, I respectfully decline to answer based upon my rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution," Fauci replied to each question.

The amendment protects people from having to incriminate themselves in court and instead forces prosecutors to prove their case.

With Fauci unwilling to defend himself, Republicans on the committee used the hearing to air some of their long-held claims about him and his advice to Americans, using Fauci's Fifth Amendment strategy to shame the once-celebrated infection disease expert.

"We have entire generations of Americans who, rightfully so, do not trust our institutions to keep them safe because of you," Sen. Rick Scott of Florida told Fauci. "This has destroyed decades of progress and lifetimes of work because you wanted to fuel your own ego and be the center of attention."

Scott asked in another exchange, "In hindsight, are you disappointed how you handled COVID? Do you have any regrets?"

Fauci gave his standard answer.

"Your legacy will not be as a man who has saved America from COVID but as a man who destroyed the public trust in American's public health institutions in exchange for five minutes of fame," Scott said. "This is how history will remember you."

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Missouri, began with, "Nothing says honesty like taking the Fifth, huh, doc?"

He then mocked Fauci's strategy by asking him a series of basic, factual questions about the day of the week and the color of the carpet.

To each, Fauci said, "On the advice of counsel, I respectfully decline to answer based upon my rights under the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution."

Hawley accused Fauci of violating the law and said he has "done more to harm science than anybody in my lifetime." He added, "I hope you'll go home and write that in your diary."

Several Democratic senators came to Fauci's defense.

Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-New Hampshire, thanked Fauci for more than 50 years of federal government service and said, "It must be enormously frustrating to know that this hearing is designed to entrap you."

She lamented the spread of public health crises such as measles and cyclosporiasis that she said should instead be the subject of congressional hearings.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Connecticut, said the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the darkest times in U.S. history and suggested the hearing was part of the Trump administration's effort to rewrite the history of a pandemic.

The Trump administration launched baseless smears against vaccines that pulled the country out of the crisis that killed 1 million Americans and 15 million people worldwide, Blumenthal said. Fauci spent decades in federal government helping "conquer" COVID-19, HIV, swine flu, Zika, Ebola and other epidemics, Blumenthal said.

"For the past 18 months, the Trump administration has been engaged in a campaign to rewrite this history," the senator said. "Today's proceeding, I fear, is part of that effort, one of the darkest days in our Senate's history."

Contributing: Zac Anderson

Teen given life term for school shooting

Four killed, nine hurt at Georgia high school

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

The teenager who committed a deadly mass shooting at a Georgia high school in 2024 and pleaded guilty to dozens of charges after the attack was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole July 28.

Colt Gray, 16, was handed the sentence days after he pleaded guilty to 55 charges, including felony murder, aggravated assault and cruelty to children following the Sept. 4, 2024, shooting at Apalachee High School in which he killed two students and two teachers and injured nine others. Gray faced a maximum sentence of life without parole. There is no death penalty for juveniles.

Gray, who was 14 at the time of the shooting, was expected to face trial in Columbia County in October. But as the deadline for him to notify the court he wanted to plead guilty approached, a "non-negotiated plea" – one in which the defense and prosecution have not agreed on a sentence – left Gray's sentence entirely up to Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm.

Barrow County District Attorney Brad Smith urged Primm to hand Gray the maximum sentence, saying he "opened fire on perfect strangers only so he could become famous," within an online community that was obsessed with mass shooters. Defense attorney Charlton Allen asked the judge for leniency saying Gray has admitted his actions and was "driven not by evil intent but by a desire to be accepted."

Primm challenged the defense's characterization, calling Gray's conduct "deliberate, contemplated evil" as he handed down his sentence.

"You wrote: 'I want to make history. I want people to remember the pain I caused,' and there you succeeded," Primm said.

Gray mimicked other mass shooters, investigators say

Ashley Gillend, an investigator with Barrow County District Attorney's office, walked through evidence obtained from Gray's devices and Discord account that she said demonstrated his obsession with and attempts to imitate other mass shooters in an attempt to achieve notoriety.

Gillend said Gray had more than 2,000 photos of the shooter who attacked Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018 on his phone and more than a dozen displayed in his room. She pointed out similarities between Gray's statements to police, journal entries and planning to those of other mass shooters.

"As a whole it didn't appear that there was any original thought from the defendant when planning the mass shooting," she said.

The prosecution also played audio clips of jail calls in which Gray encouraged his mother to look up and share information about him in the online community fixated on mass shooters that he was part of. Researcher Peter Smith testified that the group, known as the True Crime Community, was a novel form of extremism distinguished by its lack of unifying ideology. He said though the majority of participants are nonviolent, the group does have members who encourage or carry out acts of violence to gain notoriety.

Prosecutors also played clips of Gray's interviews with investigators following the shooting. Forensic psychologist Kevin Richards agreed that Gray lied to police about certain details of the attack to make the incident seem similar to other shootings, which a prosecutor described as leaving "Easter eggs" for others in his online community to find.

Forensic psychologist testifies about Gray's mental health

Gray's attorney questioned Richards about the teenager's mental health before and after the shooting. Richards said he interviewed Gray for about 15 hours, during which they first discussed his chaotic childhood, which was also described by Gray's grandmother and the head of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services.

Richards said as the family dealt with financial issues and drug use, Gray grew increasingly isolated, spent most of his time online and eventually joined the community that was "obsessed" with school shooters. Richards said he reviewed more than 50,000 messages between Gray and two people in the online group and found Gray had sent ominous messages about something happening on Sept. 4. Richards read some of these messages aloud as prosecutors displayed them in court.

Colt Gray pleads guilty to 55 counts including murder in connection to a 2024 school shooting that killed four people. POOL/COURT TV

At the time of the shooting, Richards said Gray was struggling with anxiety, paranoia, depression and thoughts of self-harm. Under questioning by the prosecution, Richards acknowledged that Gray appeared to exaggerate his mental health symptoms at times, including claiming to experience hallucinations, in an apparent attempt to bolster a potential not guilty by reason of insanity defense at an eventual criminal trial.

After he was taken into custody, Richards said Gray never denied carrying out the shooting and said he "felt terrible about the victims." But Richards also acknowledged that Gray sent "hateful" messages about victims of previous mass shootings, including the 2018 attack in Parkland, Florida.

Barrow County Sheriff's Office Investigator Jason Smith returned to the stand briefly on July 27 and testified that investigators directed Gray to write apology letters to family members of his victims as part of their interrogation. Jason Smith said although Gray seemed "very excited to write the letters," he did not believe the apologies were genuine.

Smith said that Gray appeared extremely emotional during his initial interview with law enforcement and cried at some points, but Smith said he believed his behavior was "largely performative."

"There's a lot Colt said that wasn't true and there's a lot Colt said that was true," he said of the interview.

School shooting sentencing sparks emotional testimony

Mason Schermerhorn and Christian Angulo, both 14, and teachers Richard Aspinwall, 39, and Cristina Irimie, 53, were killed in the Sept. 4, 2024, rampage, which sent shock waves through Winder, Georgia, a small town northeast of Atlanta. Several loved ones of the victims tearfully addressed the court during a nearly eight-hour hearing on July 24, expressing anger and despair, calling Gray a coward and asking the judge to sentence him to the maximum sentence he faced under the law.

"The cruel actions of Colt Gray cost precious lives … [affected] countless victims," Apalachee Principal Jessica Rehberg told the judge. "The ripple effect will be felt for generations. … For that he deserves the harshest consequences."

During the hearing, the prosecution played audio of an interview in which Gray told a detective he heard voices on the day of the shooting telling him to open fire on people in the school. Smith testified that Gray had planned the attack for some time and found the weapon used in the shooting in his father's bedroom.

Gray's sentencing comes before his father's sentencing hearing is set to begin. In March, Colin Gray was found guilty of murder and other charges for providing his son with the rifle used in the mass shooting.

During the landmark trial, Colin Gray testified in his own defense that he had no idea his son was capable of carrying out a mass shooting. "I struggle with it every day," he said during the emotional testimony.

Contributing: Natalie Neysa Alund

EMPIRE TODAY® CARPET & FLOORING

HOME FLOOR ADVANTAGE

In-Home Consult
Flooring Expert
All-Inclusive Pricing▲
Schedule-Friendly Installation

*Get 35% off plus up to an additional 41% based on project size and product selected. Discount is applied to the regular price of: (1) select styles of carpet, hardwood, tile, vinyl, and laminate when you pay regular price for installation, padding and materials. Excludes upgrades, stairs, take-up of permanently affixed flooring, non-standard floor prep, non-standard furniture moving, other miscellaneous charges, and prior purchases. Product not sold separate from installation. Residential installations only. While supplies last. Ends 8/10/2026. Subject to change.
◊With approved credit. Details at EmpireToday.com/financing.
▲A variety of unforeseen conditions, such as subfloor prep/leveling/repair, that may not be identifiable when establishing price estimate, may require additional cost.
Installation provided by independent contractors. Details and licensure at EmpireToday.com®. CSLB 1047108

© 2026 Empire Today, LLC

Saudi Arabia, U.S. join to attack Iran-linked militants

Michael Loria
USA TODAY

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia joined the United States in attacking fighters aligned with Iran, the Persian Gulf state's Ministry of Defense announced.

Saudi Arabia struck Iran-linked militias based in Iraq, the kingdom said July 29. The strikes come in response to attacks from the militants on the oil and gas facilities in the kingdom. Defense Ministry officials said the strikes were carried out in coordination with U.S. Central Command, the military arm overseeing operations in the Middle East.

The strikes confirmed by Saudi officials mark the country's first announced foray into the war President Donald Trump and ally Israel launched on the Islamic Republic of Iran on Feb. 28.

"This reaffirms the Kingdom's legitimate right to defend itself and its capabilities, while reserving the right to respond at the appropriate time and place, in line with the Almighty's words," Defense Ministry officials said in a statement on their official X account.

Saudi forces "conducted precise and targeted strikes against objectives belonging to those militias located on the territory of the Republic of Iraq and linked to the attacks on petroleum facilities in the Kingdom."

The U.S. Central Command confirmed the coordinated strikes with Saudi jets, saying they targeted "Iran-aligned terrorists" in the eastern part of Iraq. According to military officials, the attacks came in response to Iran-directed attacks on U.S. assets in the region.

"The unwarranted attacks against U.S. forces were not successful," Central Command said. "The IRGC and its terrorist proxies must cease these attacks to avoid further U.S. military response."

Central Command said there were 600 such attempted attacks on U.S. assets in the region in the first two months of the war.

At least 18 U.S. service members have died in the Iran war and hundreds have been injured.

Saudi officials promised the strikes would not mark an escalation in the fighting, but the attacks come at a point when U.S.-Iranian peace negotiations appear to have fallen apart, though Trump has claimed "good talks" were happening amid off-again, on-again bombing campaigns.

Trump asks Supreme Court to throw out Carroll award

Maureen Groppe and Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump is asking the Supreme Court to overturn a $83.3 million jury award he was ordered to pay writer E. Jean Carroll, arguing the judgment could permanently leave presidents fearful of civil liability for actions they take in office.

"If left standing, the decision below will cause significant damage, not only to this President and future Presidents, but also to 'the Nation that the Presidency was designed to serve,'" Trump's lawyers said in a filing July 28. "As this Court has recognized, it 'would seriously cripple the proper and effective administration' government if Presidents feared that their official acts could result in damages liability."

But the court already rejected Trump's appeal in a related case about more than $5 million that a jury said Trump must pay Carroll.

Both cases are part of a legal battle between Trump and Carroll that dates back to 2019 and includes two civil trials.

Carroll said in 2019 that Trump sexually assaulted her at a New York City department store in 1996, and Trump fired back with allegations that she was making up the story to sell her book.

Carroll sued him months later, eventually winning the $83.3 million judgment.

As the case was ongoing, Trump repeated the denial in a social media post in 2022. Carroll then sued Trump again under a special window of time that New York granted to sexual abuse survivors, and in 2023, a New York jury found Trump liable for sexual abuse against Carroll. That resulted in the $5 million verdict.

Federal appeals courts upheld both judgments.

Trump has asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its rejection of his appeal of the $5 million verdict, a move that rarely is successful.

Carroll's lawyers declined to comment on Trump's latest filing.

But in rejecting Trump's appeal of the trial court judgment in September, the New York-based 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the $83.3 million judgment was reasonable "in light of the extraordinary and egregious facts of this case." The court said the starting point of its review "is the now-indisputable fact that a jury found in (the other case) that Trump sexually abused Carroll in 1996," which precludes another appeal.

"The record in this case supports the district court's determination that the 'the degree of reprehensibility' of Mr. Trump's conduct was remarkably high, perhaps unprecedented,'" the appeals court wrote in its opinion.

Trump's repeated comments about Carroll resulted in "a multitude of death threats and other threats of physical injury," the appeals court said.

The jury was allowed to find that Trump would not stop defaming Carroll unless he was hit with a substantial financial penalty, the court said.

Trump's lawyers have argued he should have immunity for his 2019 comments about Carroll because he made them while serving as president.

"That use of official Presidential statements matters, because this Court has made clear that official Presidential acts may not be used as evidence to impose liability for other conduct," his lawyers have told the justices, referencing the court's 2024 ruling that presidents can't be criminally prosecuted for "official" acts taken by a president.

Bull sharks react to climate change

Once rarely used by juvenile bull sharks, Pamlico Sound in North Carolina now qualifies as a shark nursery habitat. The study offers one of the first genetic examples of a large coastal predator adapting to climate change.

Great white sharks winter in the Gulf

Great white sharks migrate thousands of miles each year from the northeastern United States and Atlantic Canada to warmer winter habitats farther south. Researchers found the sharks were commonly located along the edge of the West Florida Shelf, near Pulley Ridge, around the Florida Keys and in offshore waters near DeSoto Canyon and the Florida Panhandle.

Bull Shark profile

Typical length: Between 5.1 to 7.5 feet, can reach 10.6 feet

Habitat: Found close inshore in water less than 100 ft. deep

Appearance: A heavily built gray shark with a short, bluntly rounded snout

Great white Shark profile

Typical length: Between 7.8 to 18 feet, can reach over 26 feet

Habitat: Occurs in both coastal and insular shelves, including shallow bays and nearshore surf areas

Appearance: A powerful shark characterized by its streamlined, spindle-shaped body, pointed conical snout, caudal keel and lunate tail fin

SOURCE © Mapcreator.io | © OpenStreetMaps; OCEARCH, Barry et al., 2026, Marine Ecology Progress Series, Shark Research Institute; PHOTOS Discovery Channel handout, AFP via Getty Images; GRAPHIC Janet Loehrke/USA TODAY

Sharks

Continued from Page 1A

warming waters, USA TODAY has reported.

As ocean conditions change, some species are shifting their migration routes, feeding grounds and nursery habitats, Barry's study says. These changes can lead to more shark sightings and, in some areas, a greater likelihood of shark-human encounters.

Sharks are shifting 'poleward' amid warming waters

As ocean temperatures rise, bull sharks appear to be moving crucial nursery habitats farther north along the East Coast. Barry and her researchers found evidence that a new nursery population has become established in North Carolina, signaling a broader shift in the species' behavior.

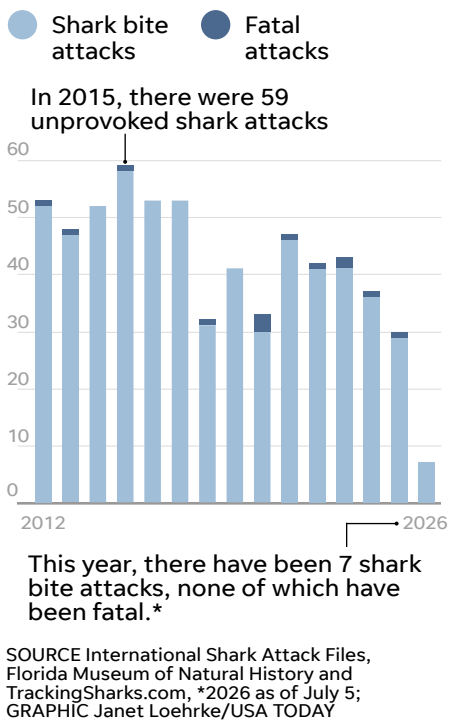
"The move poleward is driven by climate change," Barry said. "Bull sharks have a specific temperature range they like to maintain, with adults typically found between 26-30 degrees Celsius (78.8 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit) and rarely below 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit). While juveniles have been found in temperature ranges of 20-34 degrees Celsius (68 to 93.2 degrees Fahrenheit)."

Another peer-reviewed study, published in the journal Wildlife Research, challenges assumptions about great white shark migration. Researchers found that many great whites travel thousands of miles each winter from Canada and the northeastern United States to the Gulf of America.

Using satellite-linked smart position and acoustic tags, researchers tracked 92 white sharks tagged between Nova Scotia, Canada, and Jacksonville, Florida. They found that 57 sharks across all life stages spent significant time in the Gulf or Straits of Florida, primarily from December through May, as part of a long-term OCEARCH-led research effort.

"For years we suspected white sharks were using the Gulf more than people realized," Chris Fischer, founder and expedition leader of OCEARCH, posted on the group's site. "This research confirms the Gulf is a regular winter habitat for this population and highlights how connected the ecosystems of the Atlantic Ocean truly are."

Total shark bites in the U.S. from 2012 to 2026*



SOURCE International Shark Attack Files, Florida Museum of Natural History and TrackingSharks.com, *2026 as of July 5; GRAPHIC Janet Loehrke/USA TODAY

Where shark bites are most common

It's no surprise that Florida leads the nation in unprovoked shark bites. With more than 8,000 miles of coastline and millions of people entering the water every year, the state offers more opportunities for encounters between sharks and humans than anywhere else in the United States.

How often do shark attacks happen in the United States?

You're far more likely to be struck by lightning than to be attacked by a shark. Shark attacks are considered extremely rare. The Florida Museum, a state natural history museum, puts the odds of being attacked by a shark at 1 in 11.5 million; the odds of being struck by lightning in a given year are 1 in 1.2 million, according to NOAA.

TrackingSharks says seven shark bite attacks were recorded this year, as of July 5, in five states: Florida (two), California (two), Georgia (one), New York (one) and Texas (one).

How to reduce your risk of being a shark attack victim

- Have a swimming buddy. Don't go into the water alone.
- Don't swim at dawn or dusk. The light is low, which can increase the likelihood that sharks could mistaking you for other prey.
- Don't enter waters where there is fishing activity.
- Don't wear shiny jewelry. It can catch the sunlight and glint, much like fish that sharks prey upon.
- Try to avoid splashing. It generates a sound similar to that of struggling fish, which can attract sharks.

OPINION

WANT TO COMMENT?
We're on Facebook (USA TODAY Opinion) and Instagram and X (@usatodayopinion).
You can also comment directly on online columns.

Epstein survivors can't depend on AG nominee

Danielle Bensky
Opinion contributor

Danielle Bensky, who has accused sex offender Jeffrey Epstein of abuse, testifies at a Senate confirmation hearing for attorney general nominee Todd Blanche in Washington, DC, on July 16. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

More than 20 years ago, when I was a 17-year-old aspiring ballerina in New York City, I met Jeffrey Epstein.

My mother was seriously ill, and I was young and scared. Epstein recognized that vulnerability and exploited it. He presented himself as someone who could help, then used my age, dreams and my family's circumstances to manipulate and sexually abuse me.

For years, I carried what happened largely on my own. Then other survivors of Epstein's trafficking network began coming forward, and I found hope in knowing that I was not alone. Over time, our individual stories grew into a movement demanding accountability. That movement helped lead to the passage of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, which we believed would finally expose the full scope of Epstein's crimes and the people who enabled them.

What happened instead was alarming. The Department of Justice released survivors' names and other personally identifying information. This included nude images that showed young women – possibly teenagers – with their faces visible. My name, phone number, former addresses, where I worked and studied at the time and accounts of abuse were all made public.

In Epstein case, failures of prosecution falls on Todd Blanche

At the same time, the names of alleged abusers, enablers and other powerful people connected to Epstein remained hidden throughout the files. The redactions were so extensive that a federal judge ordered the DOJ to explain them or remove them.

Just as alarming, more than a thousand women and girls were abused, yet no one beyond Epstein and his former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell has been prosecuted.

Rather than pursuing leads beyond his interview with Maxwell or prosecuting anyone else, then-Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche appears to have been huddled in the White House Situation Room helping manage the political and public relations fallout from the release of the Epstein files.

Taken together, these failures paint a troubling picture. Former Attorney General Pam Bondi testified to a congressional committee that Blanche was in charge of the Epstein files release. These failures fall on his shoulders.

Now, Blanche is up for a promotion to attorney general, the country's top law enforcement officer.

During my testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 16, I told senators that Blanche had refused my repeated requests for a meeting for nearly nine months. Although he has said he met with representatives of 30 accusers, he did not meet with me or any of the survivors I know.

During that same period, he met with Maxwell for nine hours before she was moved to a low-security prison.

In his own testimony, Blanche claimed that there was no evidence to support additional prosecutions beyond Epstein and Maxwell, despite the investigative leads, survivor testimony and other records already contained in the files.

After my testimony, Sen. Thom Tillis, Republican of North Carolina, seemed moved. He said he could not support Blanche's confirmation until Blanche met with survivors directly.

Only then did Blanche's team scramble to arrange a meeting, as my fellow survivors and I – exhausted from days of travel and advocacy – were preparing to leave Washington. We rearranged our schedules and hurried to make sure our lawyers could attend.

The meeting that followed was, by any honest account, a box-checking exercise to secure Tillis' vote. Blanche offered no meaningful explanation for how the redaction failures happened, who approved the release or what steps he would take to prevent survivors from being exposed again. He made no commitment to investigate or prosecute anyone beyond Epstein and Maxwell.

America deserves an attorney general who listens to victims

Instead, we were told to take our information to the FBI. We have already done that. Survivors have reported what happened, provided evidence and retold the most painful experiences of our lives to law enforcement for decades.

Telling us to start over was not a plan for accountability. There was no attempt to work with us. It was another way to dismiss us.

Today, I am a teacher and a mother. I would not find Blanche's refusal to take accountability acceptable in my students or my child. The American people should not find it acceptable in the man seeking the highest law enforcement position in the country.

The country deserves an attorney general who listens to survivors, holds predators accountable and keeps their children safe. Blanche has shown us that he is not that person.

Tillis asked Blanche to meet with us because the senator understood that survivors deserved answers. We met with him in good faith, but he did not do the same. A meeting alone cannot become a substitute for accountability, and checking a box should not be enough to secure the senator's vote.

My message to Tillis is simple. If you hoped Blanche would offer survivors real accountability by meeting with us, he did not. If you hoped this meeting would resolve our concerns, it did not. And if your support for his confirmation depends on his ability to treat survivors of human trafficking and sexual assault with honesty and respect, then you — and every senator – should vote no on Blanche for attorney general.

Danielle Bensky is a Jeffrey Epstein survivor, public advocate and speaker fighting for government transparency, victim accountability and legislative reform in sex trafficking cases.

Opponents of data centers are on the wrong side of history

Gene Marks
Opinion contributor

Deforestation. Habitat destruction. Water and air pollution. Land and resources devoured. Noise. Corporate corruption. Government corruption. Monopolies. Eminent domain. Communities torn apart. Farmland eaten up. Small businesses uprooted. Corporate titans who buy off local politicians with promises of tax revenue.

One industry expert and author called it a "decisive struggle, in which, from the beginning to the end, the fighting will be forced," with power "rapidly centering in the hands" of "the ablest, the most energetic, and by no means the most scrupulous men in America."

Except the expert, Charles Francis Adams Jr., didn't say this in 2026. He said it in the late 1870s. And he wasn't talking about data centers. He was talking about railroads.

Today's data centers are yesterday's railroads

In the 19th century, thousands of miles of railroad were built, and the opposition to them was intense. These weren't organized environmental groups. They were conservationists, local residents, business owners, landowners, parents, farmers, Native American tribes and taxpayers enraged at how their elected leaders were spending their money.

Many didn't want trains rolling through their backyards. Many today don't want data center complexes in theirs. You can't blame them.

Where would America be today without its railroads?

Billions were spent moving freight and people faster and more efficiently, fueling economic growth, creating jobs, opening up markets and standardizing the flow of information. The costs were significant, but so were the benefits. We are better off for it.

More than 150 years later, little has changed. Today's data centers are yesterday's railroads. They are the infrastructure behind everything that powers our economy. Railroads move freight. Data centers move information and make modern commerce possible. Yesterday's railroad barons were Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Gould and James Hill. Today's builders are the companies behind hyperscale computing: Microsoft, Amazon, Google and Nvidia.

Old jobs, new industries

Like all new technologies, railroads destroyed jobs, too. Stagecoach lines, wayside inns and the small towns that depended on them withered as travelers stopped passing through.

But railroads created far more than they destroyed – construction and manufacturing jobs building everything from rail cars to locomotives, and jobs in the cities that boomed at the end of the line. They built entire new industries: national retail, refrigerated food, mass media, mail-order commerce, modern tourism and standardized time.

Like the railroads, the artificial intelligence applications that data centers power will destroy some jobs. But these technologies have also fueled millions of new businesses in just the past few years, backed by a wave of venture capital. Robotics, cybersecurity, semiconductor manufacturing and computer components – all are expanding because of AI.

A drone view shows a data center in a residential neighborhood in Lowell, Massachusetts, on July 28.
BRIAN SNYDER/REUTERS

And data center construction alone has propped up the building trades through a rough economic stretch.

In the past 20 years we've seen job titles no one had heard of: cannabis compliance manager; remote work coordinator; wellness manager. AI alone has produced prompt engineer, governance manager, automation developer, solutions architect.

The naysayers predicting mass AI unemployment are making the same mistake railroad skeptics made: betting against the human capacity to find new ways to work and contribute. History says that bet loses.

Both railroad and data center constructions have become more efficient. Ecological impact eased as energy efficiency improved, technology advanced and resources were used more wisely.

Government regulation reined in the worst abuses in the 19th century, and it will do the same today. Communities adjusted. Supply chains adapted.

Today we look back on the railroad debate and wonder what all the fuss was about. Future generations will likely say the same about ours.

None of this excuses poor planning, unnecessary environmental damage or taking property unfairly. Communities deserve a voice.

We can't cede our future to other countries – enemies or allies

But they shouldn't have a veto over infrastructure that benefits an entire nation. Are we simply not going to build data centers – and cede the field to China? To Russia? To Europe?

Imagine if that option had been on the table during the railroad debate.

Today's hyperscale computing giants are as vital to America's future today as Union Pacific and the Pennsylvania and New York railroads were to a prior century. In both cases, a minority suffered for that expansion. But because of the sacrifices made, hundreds of millions of Americans have gone on to enjoy a quality of life unmatched almost anywhere on the planet.

Every generation faces the same choice: Build the infrastructure that powers the next century, or let fear of disruption preserve the past. Americans chose the railroad. I'm convinced they'll choose AI infrastructure, too.

Gene Marks, founder of a small-business consulting firm, The Marks Group.

USA TODAY

"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation." – Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

Chairman and CEO, USA TODAY Co. **Michael Reed**
Chief Financial Officer, USA TODAY Co. **Trisha Gosser**
President, USA TODAY Media **Kristin Roberts**
Senior Vice President, USA TODAY **Monica Richardson**
Vice President of News, USA TODAY **Jamie Stockwell**
Vice President of Multimedia, USA TODAY **Michael McCarter**

addressUSA

Looking to Make a Move? Find Your Dream Home Here.

Call, Scan, or Visit

888-620-8813

addressUSA.com

Scan to discover your dream home and start your journey.

You can check the headlines from your home state or city

We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 3B**

Cracker Barrel's CEO stepping down effective Aug. 10

Julie Masino to be replaced by David Deno, most recently the CEO of Bloomin' Brands. **Page 4B**

GETTY IMAGES

PRICE OF OWNERSHIP

'Hidden' costs of buying a home can shock owners

Medora Lee USA TODAY

Buying a home is a huge milestone people save up most of their lives for, but it's very different from owning a home, according to a survey.

Nearly 2 in 3 homebuyers said homeownership has been more expensive than expected, according to business software Jobber's survey of 800 adults who purchased a home in the past two years. Of those, only 44% budgeted for ongoing maintenance, the data showed.

Buyers are so focused on homeownership that most budget for the purchase, not the full cost of ownership which can cause emotional and financial stress, the survey showed. More than half said homeownership has been more stressful than expected, 36% have lost sleep over repair or cost concerns, and 34% have even questioned their decision to buy, the survey said.

"For many homebuyers, the biggest financial surprises came from the cost of maintaining their home," Jobber's report said. "Whether it's a leaking pipe, a failing HVAC system, or an urgent repair that can't be delayed, unexpected costs often require immediate decisions and can quickly strain household budgets."

What does 'move-in ready' really mean?

Most homebuyers expect eventual maintenance and repairs, but many are caught off guard when they're needed within the first two years, Jobber said.

While 86% of homeowners described their home as move-in ready at closing, 58% uncovered unexpected repairs after moving in, Jobber data showed.

And those repairs weren't cheap. Nearly 3 of 4

See HOMES, Page 2B

'Quiet hours' latest trend in shopping

Sensory-friendly times becoming mainstream

Sara Moniuszko
USA TODAY

Trying to get your makeup or skincare staples can lead to squeezing through packed aisles of inconsiderate shoppers, music blasting overhead and perfume attacking your nose.

It's a classic, chaotic scene at many beauty stores, but now Sephora is trying to change that.

The beauty retailer is the latest in a line of stores to offer sensory-friendly hours for shoppers, but what does that mean?

Last month, Sephora globally launched what they're calling, "Quiet Hours," which they described in a news release as "an inclusive initiative aimed at anyone who enjoys a more peaceful and calmer shopping environment."

This means stores will "turn down the music and adjust screens to create a calmer atmosphere with fewer distractions" at specified times across locations.

Other retailers, including Walmart, Target and even Chuck E. Cheese, also have begun offering hours that reduce sensory triggers.

Bonnie Mitchell, a doctor of behavioral health and clinical director at The Mental Health and Stabilization Center of Sacramento, told USA TODAY these hours can be helpful for a range of people, including neurodivergent shoppers and those who just prefer a less overwhelming experience.

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term that encompasses the diverse makeup of neural processing, as it manifests differently for everyone.

While not an official medical term, some use it to describe a range of learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder and more, according to Cleveland Clinic.

It can include sensitivities to fluorescent or flickering lights, background music, announcements, crowded chatter, strong-smelling foods, perfume, cleaning product smells, unexpected touch in tight aisles or flashing displays and signage, according to True Progress Therapy.

"[Stores are] coming to understand that there is a huge untapped market with people that struggle with becoming overwhelmed with sights, sounds, smells, all of the above ... they are toning down the music, toning down the lights so they're not as harsh," Mitchell said.

For example, these hours can be a "huge game changer" for parents with children who struggle with loud environments, Mitchell says, or even someone like herself who is "highly sensitive to smells."

Sephora says its sensory-friendly hours are the first hour of business on Tuesdays and Saturdays, but to check your specific store location for details.

See SHOPPING, Page 2B

Kroger's plan for cage-free eggs by '25 comes up short

Olivia Evans
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

More than a decade ago, Kroger promised shoppers it would transition to "a 100% cage-free egg supply chain by 2025."

As of July 2026, that promise remains unfilled.

In March 2016, the Cincinnati-based grocery giant announced its intent to move its egg supply to cage-free, noting its customers were choosing at an "increasing rate" the eggs laid by hens housed indoors with unlimited access to food, water and freedom to roam. The original announcement followed a campaign by animal cruelty activists against the national grocer and came at a time when 85% of the eggs sold at Kroger came from hens confined in cages, The Courier Journal previously reported as part of the USA TODAY Network.

However, in a 2022 corporate report reviewed by The Courier Journal, Kroger quietly shared a revised goal – giving the grocer until 2030 to get 70% of its egg supply to cage-free status.

Kent Stein, corporate policy specialist for farm animal protection at Humane World for Animals, a global animal rights nonprofit, said the "backtracked" promise by Kroger "stands in contrast to so many grocery retailers, including Amazon, Costco, Target, CVS, Walgreens, Circle K, Trader Joe's and more, that have already achieved their 100% cage-free goals or established concrete plans to soon stop selling eggs from producers that keep hens confined in cages."

On July 9, at the grand opening for the new Kroger in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, the activist group had a mobile billboard on display at the gas station across the street from the store that said, "Kroger's eggs are gross" and depicted footage of hens in cages.

When asked about Kroger's commitment to a cage-free egg transition, a Kroger spokesperson said, "I don't really have a comment on that."

Here's what to know about Kroger's transition to cage-free eggs:

Kroger backs off egg transition goal

Since the grocery company initially announced its goal of 100% cage-free eggs in stores by 2025, its tracked progress toward this goal in its annual Environmental, Social, and Governance Report, which publicly discloses company data for the previous year on environmental impact, social responsibility and corporate governance.

A Courier Journal analysis of Kroger's ESG Reports found that from 2016-21, the company reported it was "on track" or making its transition to cage-free eggs an "area of focus."

But in the ESG report published by

When asked about Kroger's commitment to a cage-free egg transition, a Kroger spokesperson said, "I don't really have a comment on that." BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES

Kroger in 2022, tucked near the bottom of the 68-page document, the grocer provides an "updated goal" that stated, "Given the current rate of industry progress and consumers' desire for affordability, we do not expect to achieve our 2025 commitment. Kroger anticipates

See KROGER, Page 2B

12,000-plus pounds of bacon recalled over import violation

Julia Gomez
USA TODAY

Maple Leaf Foods has recalled over 12,000 pounds of bacon imported to the United States from Canada because of an import violation, according to a notice from the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The products were "imported from Canada without the benefit of import reinspection into the United States," the FSIS stated in its July 24 notice.

The recall affects not ready-to-eat smoked bacon products distributed to retailers in Idaho, Oregon and Washington state, according to the FSIS.

No illnesses have been reported related to the product, per the recall notice.

The recall also comes about a week after President Donald Trump's administration announced 50% tariffs on many Canadian imports.

The tariffs, expected to impact goods imported into the United States from Canada's auto, alcohol and dairy industries, are scheduled to take effect Aug. 19. However, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has signaled he is open to negotiations, so the final rate and scope may still change.

Here's what to know about the bacon recall.

What is being recalled?

The following Maple Leaf Foods products are included in the recall:

- **Royale Natural Applewood Smoked ALL NATURAL Uncured Bacon Product of Canada** – 12-ounce vacuum package, with the following sell-by dates printed on the side of the package:

Sept. 1, 2026
Sept. 7, 2026

- **TOP VALU Uncured Hardwood Smoked Bacon Product of Canada** – 12-ounce vacuum package with the following sell-by dates printed on the side of the package:

Sept. 1, 2026
Sept. 2, 2026
Sept. 4, 2026
Sept. 5, 2026
Sept. 7, 2026

The recalled products were produced on the following dates:

- June 9
- June 10
- June 12
- June 13
- June 15

"EST. 1" is also printed on the side of the package.

Where were the products sold?

The products were sent to Grocery Outlet distributors and retailers in the following states, according to FSIS:

- Idaho
- Oregon
- Washington

A full list of where the product was distributed will be posted to the FSIS website once it is available.

What should you do if you purchased the recalled products?

The agency said the recalled products may still be in consumers' fridges and freezers.

It urged people not to consume the recalled products.

Consumers who purchased the recalled bacon should throw it away or return it to the place of purchase, according to the FSIS.

Contributing: Rachel Barber

Homes

Continued from Page 1B

buyers say they spent upward of $10,000 on unexpected repairs or maintenance within the first two years.

Ownership costs aren't just repairs and maintenance

Beyond repairs and maintenance, homeowners also can be stung by high insurance costs and property taxes, experts said. Home insurance premiums have increased 46% since 2021, including a 12% rise in 2025, according to insurance comparison marketplace Insurify's home insurance report.

"Insurance has become an increasingly significant piece of the puzzle in many parts of the country as premiums continue to rise," comparison site LendingTree said in a report. It attributes the jump in insurance rates to more adverse weather events and inflation raising the costs of building materials, labor and home repairs.

Home insurance makes up 8.5%, or about $200, of the typical $2,354 monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage nationwide, according to a LendingTree analysis.

In 20 states, insurance rises to 10% or more of monthly housing costs, the survey showed. Nebraska leads with home insurance swallowing nearly 20% of housing costs, followed by Oklahoma at 17.6% and Texas at 14.4%.

"Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas all have severe wind and hail risks, and Texas homeowners face additional threats from hurricanes and even wildfires, depending on their location," said Rob Bhatt, LendingTree insurance analyst and licensed insurance agent. "Insurance companies in these states have priced the potential costs of these types of disasters into their rates."

But not all rising insurance costs are tied to climate risks. State insurance regulators can significantly influence whether and when policyholders see that risk reflected in their premiums, said Julia Taliesin, economic analyst and a licensed insurance agent at Insurify.

"Insurance affordability has become a kitchen-table issue. Inflation and climate risk have made it a key cost consideration, sometimes determining whether someone can afford a home in the area where they want to buy," she said.

Property taxes can be taxing, too

More than three of four homeowners said their property taxes rose more than what they budgeted for, and 64% said they were shocked by the size of the bill according to property tax consulting service Ownwell's survey of 2,500 homeowners fielded in March.

In 2024, property tax costs rose across every major metro from the prior year, LendingTree said after analyzing the latest government data. Homeowners paid a median of $3,119 annually in property taxes, or $260 a month and up 5.1%, the analysis showed.

"When considering the costs of homeownership, too many people take too narrow a view," Matt Schulz, LendingTree chief consumer finance analyst said. "They think about the home price, interest rates and closing costs, but they don't always consider other recurring costs over the long run, including property taxes, homeowners association (HOA) fees and insurance. If you're not considering all these costs and more when thinking about how much house you can afford, you're doing yourself a disservice. These costs matter, and you ignore them at your peril."

What should homebuyers do?

Additionally, many eager buyers, especially young ones, enter homeownership after making significant compromises that can hurt them. According to Jobber, 93% of Gen Z buyers made concessions to buy the home they wanted,

Beyond repairs and maintenance, homeowners also can be stung by high insurance costs and property taxes, experts said. Home insurance premiums have increased 46% since 2021, including a 12% rise in 2025, according to insurance comparison marketplace Insurify's home insurance report.
ALAN YOUNGBLOOD/USA TODAY NETWORK

including 10% who waived contingencies, or what might be considered legal escape clauses like inspection, appraisal and financing protections. Paying for an inspection that can uncover issues can be worth the money, the report said.

Know that property taxes will probably rise after you purchase a home. Property taxes are calculated by multiplying your home's assessed value, based on what your home will sell for, and the local tax rate. Assuming you purchased the home for more than what the previous owners paid years ago, your home will likely be reassessed higher and that will push up the property tax. Insurance premiums also are trending up, but insurance commissioners manage rate-change requests from insurers and the overall stability of the state's insurance market. That could give voters a say, Taliesin noted.

"Insurance commissioners are powerful public officials that consumers rarely know about," she said.

In 11 states, voters choose a commissioner and in 39, the governor appoints one. This year, four states have insurance commissioner seats on the Nov. 3 ballot: California, Georgia, Kansas, and Oklahoma – all of which are facing rising insurance costs, Taliesin said. And 36 states with appointed commissioners are holding gubernatorial elections, including Arizona, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, and Wisconsin, where the party could flip, according to Cook Political Report forecasts.

"The 2026 midterm elections could materially affect home insurance premiums for millions of Americans," Taliesin said.

Kroger

Continued from Page 1B

transitioning about 70% of eggs sold (by units) to cage-free or higher-welfare standards by 2030."

"Kroger's goal revision is unacceptable," Stein said. "A target of 70% cage-free eggs by 2030 is a lackluster mark showing no ambition, as it's virtually already in line with our country's status quo."

The ESG Reports show that the transition to cage-free comes at a hefty cost for the grocer, with Kroger reporting it "anticipates investing about $45 million to support this roadmap to 2030."

"Kroger's claims about cage-free egg prices don't carry weight," Stein said. "Hundreds of other cost-conscious companies like Amazon, Costco, McDonald's and so many more have already made the change to cage-free. Kroger had more than 10 years to prepare for and fulfill its animal welfare commitment. Instead, it took the route of allowing animals to suffer horrifically while breaking its promise to the public."

Kroger reported that for the full year of 2022, cage-free eggs represented roughly 32% of total egg revenue across the company, a stark decrease from the nearly 46% of total egg revenue it accounted for in 2021.

By 2023, the total egg revenue from cage-free eggs rebounded to almost 52%. This uptick in revenue from cage-free eggs came at a point when Kroger's units of eggs sourced from cage-free hens "held steady" with its 2022 rate of 33%. In 2023, Kroger stated it was once again "on track" for its new supply transition goal.

Kroger's most recently published ESG report reflecting progress in 2024 stated the company saw 56% of total egg revenue from cage-free eggs and bolstered its units of cage-free eggs to 43%.

The company noted this progress "exceeded" its revamped goal for 2024.

Single-use plastic bags at Kroger

The total transition to cage-free eggs by 2025 isn't the only broken promise from Kroger.

In 2018, Kroger announced it would phase out "use-once, throw-it-away plastic bags" and transition to reusable bags by 2025. However, this company goal also had its timeline quietly extended, The Courier Journal reported in January.

"We originally aimed to achieve our bag-reduction goal in 2025; however, due to our current rate of progress, the high cost of all-paper bags to both our business and the planet, our customers' feedback from multiple pilots across the country, and an anticipated slowdown in legislative action, we are extending our timeline for phasing out single-use plastic bags," a document provided by Kroger to The Courier Journal stated.

While Kroger has not yet publicized a new target date for completing its transition away from single-use plastic bags, the company previously said it remained confident it would be able to achieve this goal despite "significant setbacks" to its progress from the COVID-19 pandemic, during which it suspended its bag-related projects.

The company reported that by the end of 2024, more than "700 Kroger-operated stores stopped providing single-use plastic shopping bags for our customers, switching to paper or multi-use plastic bags as alternatives, depending on state requirements or local bag ordinances." And as of January, no Kentucky Kroger locations had made the switch.

Contact Business Reporter Olivia Evans at oevans@usatodayco.com or on X at @oliviamevans_.

Shopping

Continued from Page 1B

A win-win for stores and shoppers

While Mitchell thinks greater awareness about neurodiversity is part of why stores are adopting these hours, it may also be a good business move.

Some data suggests these hours are a win-win for companies and consumers, too, she said. For example, one survey found a majority of shoppers say an enjoyable in-store atmosphere plays a key factor in opting to make purchases in-store vs. online.

People may be "more readily available to walk through and take their time, versus 'I need to get in and get out because I'm overwhelmed,' " she explained.

With this in mind, she wonders if sensory-friendly will become the new normal. "It'll be interesting to see what the future holds," she said. "If, instead of doing hours, they actually just go back to toning everything down."

Christine Hemphill of Open Inclusion, one of the groups that Sephora consulted with, thinks quiet hours are the "future of retail."

"By listening directly to neurodivergent and sensory-sensitive beauty customers" the retailer helped create an environment that is "more welcoming, accessible and comfortable for many people," Hemphill said in the news release.

How to cope without sensory friendly hours

If sensory friendly hours aren't available at the stores you frequent, there are still ways to prepare for a potentially overwhelming shopping experience, Mitchell says. First, plan ahead, she advises. Knowing what the store has, where it's located and having an idea of how long it will take to complete a shopping trip can give someone "much better control" over themselves and the whole experience," Mitchell said. Finding a place nearby where you can sit and calm yourself if needed can also be helpful.

You can also use a buddy system. If you're feeling overwhelmed, for example, ask a friend to go in for you, Mitchell suggested. Or contact the store ahead of time to hold an item for you at the front. That way, "all you have to do is go in, purchase it and leave," she explained.

Contributing: Drew Pittock

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Montgomery: Beginning Aug. 1, school discipline won't just affect report cards or extracurricular activities. Under Taylor's Law, certain disciplinary actions can also delay when some teens are eligible to get a learner's permit or driver's license.

ALASKA Anchorage: Authorities said former Anchorage Assembly member and longtime teacher Karen Bronga was killed in a head-on collision on Sterling Highway after a southbound pickup crossed into oncoming traffic and struck the motorhome in which she was riding, KDLL reported.

ARIZONA Phoenix: In Arizona's waterways, the decadeslong practice of stocking non-native sport fish for recreational angling has devastated the native wildlife, conservation advocates say. About 85% of Arizona's native fish are in decline, more than any other state, and two-thirds of species are currently threatened or teetering on the edge of extinction. The Center for Biological Diversity has now declared that it plans to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Arizona Game and Fish Department for what the group calls problematic management of the state's fish-stocking program.

ARKANSAS Fort Smith: The city of Fort Smith's long-awaited modification to its federal Consent Decree has received final approval, officially extending the deadline for completing federally mandated sewer system improvements by more than 11 years.

CALIFORNIA San Diego: Injuries involving electric bicycles "have increased dramatically across California," a new study from the University of California San Diego has found. While there were two reported e-bike collisions in 2018, that figure rose to more than 1,500 in 2024, according to the study.

COLORADO Denver: The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Colorado's $3-per-day congestion impact charge on rental cars, turning down a challenge from an industry group representing Avis, Hertz, Enterprise and others.

CONNECTICUT Stratford: Construction began on the $1.6 billion TIME-1 rail modernization project, a three-phase effort to speed up Metro-North New Haven Line service by raising train speeds and cutting travel times to New York City, WTNH reported.

DELAWARE Wilmington: Mayor John Carney dusted off his veto stamp on an ordinance that would have prohibited the city from shutting off water for some residents who are behind on their water bills.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Metro Transit Police's fare-evasion crackdown has slowed, with citations dropping to roughly 41 per day from about 80 per day when enforcement ramped up in May, though officials say fare enforcement remains a priority amid millions in lost revenue, WUSA9 reported.

FLORIDA Jacksonville: Jacksonville's college market has added a four-year medical school with the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine opening its LECOM at Jacksonville University campus.

GEORGIA Augusta: Metro Augusta is No. 1 on the 2026 "Cities on the Rise" list compiled by online career development and professional networking platform LinkedIn. Augusta is the only Georgia city to make the list.

HAWAII Honolulu: A new study by researchers at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology found that premium Japanese rice varieties can be successfully grown on Kauai, raising the possibility of reviving local rice production and improving Hawaii's food security, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Boise: Idaho wildlife officials estimate the state's wolf population declined by about 100 animals in 2025 to 1,129 wolves, driven largely by expanded hunting and trapping, Idaho Capital Sun reported.

ILLINOIS Peoria: A local nonprofit group has designated the Detweiller Marina property as a historic landmark as a battle continues over the future of the area.

INDIANA Jeffersonville: An Indiana industrial park will now be a leader in "supporting America's energy security" thanks to the opening of a new solar facility. CS PowerTech Inc. opened its flagship manufacturing facility for production of solar cells at River Ridge Commerce Center.

HIGHLIGHT: OHIO

Cincinnati Zoo senior aviculturist Aimee Owen says the Guam kingfishers' innate assertiveness makes them a strong candidate for translocation.
PHIL DIDION/USA TODAY NETWORK

Cincinnati: Watching the Cincinnati Zoo's two Guam kingfishers on exhibit, you'd never guess that the rare species would have vanished from its homeland. The birds are "mean in every aspect of their nature," according to senior aviculturist Aimee Owen. But this innate assertiveness makes them a strong candidate for translocation, Owen said, and the breeding effort at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden may help the birds return to the wild. For decades, the zoo has taken part in a global collaboration dedicated to recovering the Guam kingfisher, known as Sihek in the indigenous CHamoru language. Decades of breeding later, the zoo currently has 17 of the small, colorful creatures.

IOWA Rockwell City: After a record-setting 193 days, Central Iowa Water Works turned off the nitrate removal facility that's enabled the regional authority to meet federal safe drinking water limits for roughly six months.

KANSAS Salina: A new city commissioner will be selected in less than a month, after the resignation of Jerry Ivey II on July 24.

KENTUCKY Frankfort: Former Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis is facing a new lawsuit claiming she hid an inheritance to avoid paying a civil rights judgment to a couple, according to court records.

LOUISIANA New Orleans: A special prosecutor has dismissed a 16-count felony indictment against Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill at the request of New Orleans Mayor Helena Moreno and other city officials who were the purported victims of Murrill's alleged crimes.

MAINE York: Deckard Technologies, hired by the town in February, identified between 394 and 472 rentals listed on websites such as Airbnb and Vrbo. Selectboard Chair Todd Frederick said the findings will help the board determine whether additional action is warranted amid rising complaints.

MARYLAND Hagerstown: Maryland residents struggling to pay natural gas bills may be eligible for up to $500 in assistance through Columbia Gas of Maryland's reopened HeatShare program. The program is available to qualifying customers who have exhausted other forms of energy assistance, according to a community announcement.

MASSACHUSETTS Wellesley: The Massachusetts Horticultural Society will soon remove a historic sugar maple in the Italianate Garden at the Garden at Elm Bank, according to a community announcement. The move is being made because arborists have determined the tree is structurally unsafe due to its destructive wood-decay fungus.

MICHIGAN Lansing: A petition initiative seeking to ban large companies with government contracts from making political contributions in Michigan cleared a notable administrative step and now moves closer to potentially appearing on the November ballot. The Michigan Board of State Canvassers voted to certify the signatures submitted by the Michiganders for Money Out of Politics petition initiative.

MINNESOTA Minneapolis: A federal judge blocked Minnesota from enforcing a newly enacted law that made the state the first nationally to outright ban prediction markets like those run by Kalshi and Polymarket.

MISSISSIPPI Oxford: The University of Mississippi athletics department and the Ole Miss Athletics Foundation have shattered their annual fundraising record over the past fiscal year. Ole Miss raised a record $107.9 million during the 2025-26 fiscal year, the school announced.

MISSOURI Rolla: Missouri University of Science and Technology has received a $38 million federal award to advance efforts aimed at strengthening the nation's domestic critical minerals supply chain and expanding economic development opportunities across a 14-county region in Missouri.

MONTANA Ekalaka: The Carter County Museum in Ekalaka is planning to triple its size, a major expansion expected to draw thousands of visitors and bolster preservation of the small Montana town's local history, KFYR reported.

NEBRASKA Kearney: A new Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare report found that 44 sexual-abuse-related allegations were made by 37 youths against 19 staff members at the Kearney Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center over roughly a year, KOLN reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Nevada overdose rates have dropped by 2% since last year, but that's a smaller decline than in most of the rest of the country, and local health officials aren't sure why, Nevada Current reported.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Hampton: One of New Hampshire's fastest-growing cultural celebrations is coming to the Seacoast's most iconic destination for the first time. On Aug. 2, the fifth annual New Hampshire Jewish Festival will make its exciting Hampton Beach debut, transforming Hampton Beach State Park into a vibrant afternoon of live music, delicious kosher food, family fun, and cultural celebration.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: New Jersey ranked near the top of the country for household wealth in 2024, according to newly released Census Bureau data. It ranked even higher for debt.

NEW MEXICO Las Cruces: The Las Cruces City Council voted to remove select and policy review committees from the city Municipal Code, which included a panel that a New Mexico watchdog described as a secret policymaking body.

NEW YORK Urbana: Work is expected to begin this fall to modernize the historic Pleasant Valley Winery. Vine Enterprises, LLC will invest at least $47 million to restore operations at the state's second largest winery, in the town of Urbana in the Finger Lakes Wine Region. Gov. Kathy Hochul announced $12 million in state funding will support the project and help spur more demand for New York-grown grapes.

NORTH CAROLINA Brunswick County: A family-friendly entertainment center coming to the Southport area is having some delays. It is coming up on a year since Brunswick County approved the rezoning of a vacant property to become a fun center. Though the owners planned to wrap up construction by summer 2026, delays have pushed the opening date to next year.

NORTH DAKOTA Bismarck: Warnings have been posted at several lakes across the state amid an increase in potentially harmful cyanobacteria blooms fueled by summer heat and low water levels, KFYR reported.

OKLAHOMA Tulsa: IKEA is getting closer to opening its first location in Oklahoma as soon as the end of 2026. On July 28, IKEA officials confirmed that they are moving forward and opening the Tulsa location in fall 2026. An exact opening date has not been announced.

OREGON Salem: The seismic retrofit and upgrades at Salem Civic Center are ahead of schedule and are expected to be complete in January 2027, with employees possibly moving back as soon as February.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: Gov. Josh Shapiro touted new funding for mental health programs in Pennsylvania's budget as a major achievement, including the $15 million boost among his administration's 18 budget wins. The budget allocated $10 million for the 988 crisis hotline, which serves as a lifeline geared toward suicide prevention and helping callers in need access critical treatment services.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: A multilingual charter school that was poised to open next fall is suing Gov. Dan McKee, legislative leaders and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education over the passage of a three-year moratorium on new public charter schools.

SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia: Former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford has announced his run for U.S. Senate in a special Republican primary set for Aug. 11.

SOUTH DAKOTA Sioux Falls: According to estimates, one of several proposed pipeline systems to deliver Missouri River water in South Dakota could cost $8.4 billion to $10 billion, South Dakota Searchlight reported.

TENNESSEE Knoxville: Repairs to the amphitheater at World's Fair Park are underway and on track for March 2027 completion. Repairs to the outdoor stage have been highly anticipated: It's the first renovation since the Tennessee Amphitheater was installed for the 1982 World's Fair.

TEXAS Corpus Christi: A water emergency that at one point threatened to descend on Corpus Christi as early as May 2026 is now projected for more than two years later – a dramatic, lengthy reprieve from a circumstance that would have seen among the harshest of water restrictions. Projections now show a potential water emergency called in September 2028, City Manager Peter Zanoni said.

UTAH Ephraim: Wildlife officials tranquilized and relocated a bear after it wandered into Ephraim city limits, KUTV reported.

VERMONT Barton: Barton hosted Vermont's first Tunnel to Towers 5K on July 25 at the Orleans County Fairgrounds, raising more than $15,000, WCAX reported.

VIRGINIA Blacksburg: Virginia Tech's School of Architecture received a record $20 million gift, the largest donation in the school's history, to support architecture education and future program development, WFXR reported.

WASHINGTON Port Orchard: A Domino's Pizza in Port Orchard sustained significant damage after a vehicle crashed into the restaurant's wall and then fled the scene.

WEST VIRGINIA Elkins: Tygart Valley United Way has pledged a $20,000 founding gift to support Interact Children's Museum's Founding 150 Campaign, WDTV reported.

WISCONSIN Oshkosh: Lourdes Academy is investing $2.1 million in a new Early Learning Center on its Oshkosh campus while also welcoming a new director of advancement as enrollment continues to rise. According to a community announcement, the construction project will add preschool and daycare space at the school's main campus and further expand services for young families.

WYOMING Cheyenne: Cheyenne Frontier Days drew more than 283,000 attendees during its 130th annual celebration, an increase of more than 33,000 visitors from 2025, Cap City News reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

Cracker Barrel's CEO is stepping down effective Aug. 10

Gabe Hauari and Melina Khan
USA TODAY

Outgoing Cracker Barrel CEO Julie Masino will be replaced by David Deno, most recently the CEO of Bloomin' Brands, the owner of casual restaurant chains such as Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's Italian Grill and Bonefish Grill. ERIC SHELTON/USA TODAY NETWORK

Cracker Barrel will soon have a new leader.

The company announced July 27 CEO Julie Masino will step down as CEO and member of the board effective Aug. 10.

Masino will be replaced by David Deno, most recently the CEO of Bloomin' Brands, the owner of casual restaurant chains such as Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's Italian Grill and Bonefish Grill.

Masino will remain with Cracker Barrel as an adviser until Oct. 9, the company said.

"Following a robust and thoughtful search process, we are pleased to welcome David as Cracker Barrel's next CEO," said Carl Berquist, independent chairman of the Cracker Barrel board, in a news release.

"He brings decades of experience across the restaurant and retail industries, with a strong track record of leading businesses through growth and a demonstrated commitment to operational excellence, guest experience, and team member engagement."

Deno said in the news release he is "honored to lead the Cracker Barrel team" and looks forward to "unlocking the full potential of this remarkable brand."

Deno began his tenure as CEO of Bloomin' Brands in 2019, having previously served as the company's executive vice president and chief financial officer from 2012 to 2019.

Masino's departure follows 2025 rebrand controversy

The departure of Masino as CEO follows an attempt to rebrand the chain that sparked controversy in summer 2025.

On Aug. 19, 2025, Cracker Barrel unveiled a new, simplified logo.

While still featuring the company's classic gold and brown color palette, it removed a man seated next to a wooden barrel.

Some customers decried the logo change as uninviting.

President Donald Trump also weighed in, writing in a Truth Social post that the chain could earn "free publicity" if it went back to its old logo.

On Aug. 26, the same day as Trump's initial post, Cracker Barrel said it would drop the new logo and return to the "Old Timer."

"We thank our guests for sharing your voices and love for Cracker Barrel. We said we would listen, and we have," the company's statement said.

"Our new logo is going away and our 'Old Timer' will remain."

Later, Cracker Barrel said it would not move forward with planned restaurant remodels – which were intended to make locations more modern.

Cracker Barrel also ended its partnership with the company that advised its logo and restaurant design.

During its quarterly financial results call with investors on Dec. 9, 2025, Masino acknowledged the chain had a "difficult" few months.

"While many of our guests are enjoying our improved food and guest experience, we certainly have more work to do to regain the trust and confidence of other who have been slower to return," she said.

Shein warns of Trump tariff impact after posting first-quarter loss

James Powel
USA TODAY

Founded in Nanjing, China, and headquartered in Singapore, Shein has found itself at the center of trade tensions between the United States and China. SARAH MEYSSONNIER/REUTERS

Fast-fashion retailer Shein blamed Trump administration trade policies with China for a loss in the first quarter of 2026 in financial filings as the purveyor of ultra-cheap clothing prepares to go public.

Pre-IPO documents filed with The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong showed the company taking a $99 million loss in the first quarter of the year. The company made a profit of $395 million in the first quarter of 2025, according to the documents.

Founded in Nanjing, China, and headquartered in Singapore, Shein has found itself at the center of trade tensions between the United States and China. Trump ended the de minimis exemption, a trade loophole for low-cost imported goods, for imports from China in May of 2025.

The company said that the move has had an "adverse impact" on sales in its largest market.

Shein's U.S. revenue fell 14.3% to $2.04 billion in the first quarter from $2.38 billion a year earlier. The United States accounted for 22.5% of quarterly revenue, down from 29.4% of annual revenue in 2023.

Shein said that Chinese-origin products sold directly from the company or through its marketplace and shipped to the United States are now subject to tax rates ranging from 10% to 87.5%.

Before the Trump administration's actions, those products were taxed 0% to 62.5%, according to the company.

"In response to the increased duties and taxes, we are pursuing a wide range of options, including increasing our prices in the U.S. market to offset a portion of the increased costs," Shein said. "We expect to pass on the majority of the increased costs under our cost-plus pricing strategy."

It also noted in the filing that the U.S. war on Iran has affected consumer demand in the Middle East and disrupted shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz. But the company said the war "has not had and is not currently expected to have a material adverse impact on our overall business."

Shein faces EU fee, criticism

The financial documents gave investors a look at the pressure facing Shein as it seeks new funds amid higher costs, slower growth, and growing regulatory scrutiny in key markets.

The European Union, a key market for Shein, also imposed a €3 fee on low-value e-commerce imports this month to curb what the bloc calls unfair competition from China.

Europe accounted for about one-third of Shein's revenues in 2025.

"Although it remains too early to fully assess, it is possible that trends in the EU could be generally in line with or exceed the impact observed in the U.S. after the removal of the U.S. de minimis exemption," Shein said.

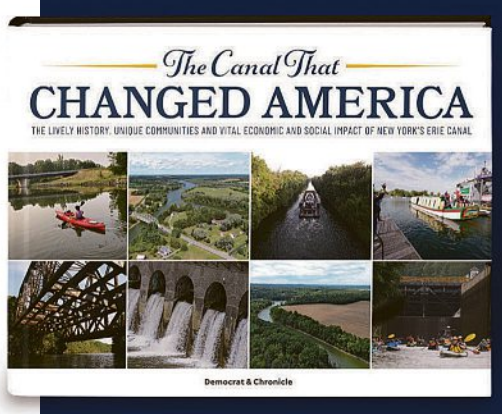
Shein has faced criticism from rivals, regulators and advocacy groups over issues including working conditions in supplier factories, allegedly addictive features of its shopping app, and the environmental impact of shipping large volumes by air.

Contributing: Reuters

Discover the history and beauty of the

Erie Canal

in a hardcover book


The Canal That
CHANGED AMERICA
THE LIVELY HISTORY, UNIQUE COMMUNITIES AND VITAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF NEW YORK'S ERIE CANAL
Democrat & Chronicle

cover not final

$31.95 ~~$39.95~~
plus tax & shipping
offer expires Oct. 7, 2026
books ship Nov. 13, 2026

They called it "Clinton's Folly." Two centuries later, it looks like genius.

The Erie Canal moved goods, people and ideas across 363 miles of New York State, turning small towns into industrial cities and making New York City the country's busiest port. Along its banks, abolitionists organized, suffragists marched and utopian communities took root.

This hardcover book from the Democrat & Chronicle covers the canal's history from the towering lift locks at Little Falls to Lyons, the Peppermint Village, and features close to 100 photographs by photojournalist and kayaker Tina MacIntyre-Yee, captured across 60 miles of paddles in the canal's bicentennial year. Preorder today and save 20% off the cover price!

Preorder online and save at
ErieCanal.PictorialBook.com

Preorder by check/money order and ship my order to the address below **after Nov. 13, 2026**.
Quantity of books: ___ x $41.50* = $_____ total
**Includes sales tax, shipping, and mail-in processing fees; discount expires Oct. 7, 2026. Order online for best price.*
Checks payable to **Pediment Books** (OR) Pay with credit/debit/PayPal online: **ErieCanal.PictorialBook.com**
PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____
Send form and payment to:
Erie Canal Book (D&C)
c/o Pediment Books
12004 NE 95th St., Suite 850
Vancouver, WA 98682
Please remember to make checks payable to ***Pediment Books***
Erie Canal Book • #PS02

Democrat & Chronicle

NFL

Winning rehab

Patrick Mahomes explains competition-fueled recovery from left knee surgery

Jarrett Bell
Columnist
USA TODAY

ST. JOSEPH, MO – It would have been fitting enough if the Kansas City Chiefs had rolled out a red carpet at Scanlon Hall and lined the path with trumpets blaring as Patrick Mahomes arrived.

Sure, it was only the start of training camp at Missouri Western State University – and rookie camp at that – but this is a big deal nonetheless.

Mahomes is here! And so is his left knee, surgically repaired, rehab-fortified and lathered up. The best quarterback in the NFL hit another milestone in his comeback journey, cleared to fully practice in any and all drills from day one of camp.

"I'm excited," Mahomes confirmed July 24 during a 12-minute news conference inside the players' dorm. "I've been seeing cinder block walls rehabbing every single day in Kansas City."

When Mahomes checked in, it had been 223 days since he was carted off the field at Arrowhead Stadium with a torn ACL and LCL in his left knee.

Shoot, back in the day, an injury like that might have wiped out a player for a year-and-a-half. Yet here was Mahomes, 30, tracking to make it back for the Monday night regular-season opener against the Denver Broncos on Sept. 14.

Here's to modern medicine and advanced rehab. Mahomes got the clearance on July 22 during a follow-up exam with his surgeon, Dan Cooper.

"This is just another checkpoint on the schedule, you know?" Mahomes said, offering obligatory caution to go with some extreme confidence. "And so, you have to continue to work. It's not over and I'm not going to play a game tomorrow. You've got to continue to work and get better and better and go through all practice, and prove to the coaches, prove to the doctors and everybody that I'm the same quarterback I was before, if not better."

See BELL, Page 4C

Quarterback Patrick Mahomes takes part in the Chiefs training camp at Missouri Western State University on July 25 in St. Joseph. JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES

WSeriesly, Dodgers not splashy at deadline

Josh Peter
USA TODAY

Knowing the Los Angeles Dodgers and their free-spending ways, it's inevitable they'll acquire pitcher Tarik Skubal or another high-priced player before the Aug. 3 trade deadline and maximize their chances to win a third straight World Series title.

Their willingness to pay top dollar for free agents is indisputable. Start with Shohei Ohtani's $700 million, 10-year contract. Or the $240 million, four-year deal Kyle Tucker got before this season. Six other players on the roster signed deals worth more than $100 million.

But do the Dodgers go all out at the trade deadline?

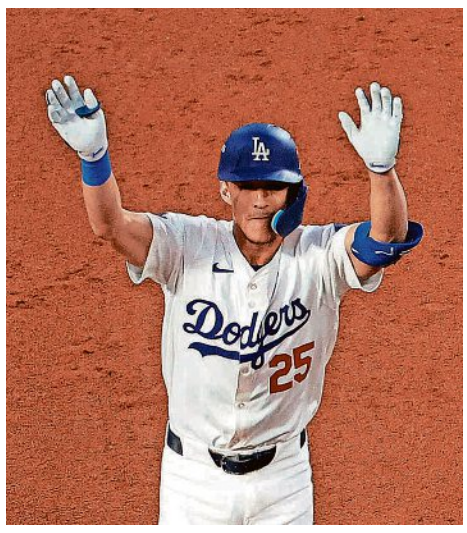
Of the eight highest paid players on the current roster, none were acquired at the MLB trade deadline. In fact, their last two were awfully quiet, yet the Dodgers still won the World Series in 2024 and 2025.

2024: Edman ends up playoff hero

For the Dodgers in 2024, there was no obvious splash at the trade deadline.

Los Angeles added pitchers Jack Flaherty and Michael Kopech, along with

See DODGERS, Page 4C



Tommy Edman was a trade-deadline acquisition who ended up the 2024 NLCS MVP. KIYOSHI MIO/IMAGN IMAGES

Energy drinks, liquor grease bigger March Madnesses

Brent Schrotenboer
USA TODAY

To help protect college athletes from vices like vodka and Red Bull, the NCAA has long banned advertising of such products during broadcasts of its championship events, including the NCAA basketball tournaments.

The NCAA once even nixed a proposal by 5-Hour Energy to sponsor the name of a bowl game, leading that bowl game to go out of business. But times have changed, starting July 1, when the governing body for college sports opened the door for spirit and energy drink companies to advertise television commercials during NCAA championships.

The NCAA abandoned its previous principles for a reason – money. The NCAA confirmed to USA TODAY Sports it changed its advertising policy as part of its agreement with television companies to expand the NCAA men's and women's tournaments from 68 to 76 teams starting in March 2027.

"The NCAA Division I board of directors changed these policies to maximize the revenue the Association returns to member schools as they are investing more and more in student-athletes on their campuses," said Dan Gavitt, NCAA senior vice president of basketball. "The change also brings NCAA Championships in line with most schools and conferences which have been selling alcohol during events and accepting alcohol

See NCAA, Page 4C

Detroit in overdrive for Rocket

Tony Paul
The Detroit News | USA TODAY Network

DETROIT – The city that put the world on wheels is hitting the brakes when it comes to professional golf.

This is it for the PGA Tour in Detroit, at least for the foreseeable future, with the Rocket Classic set to be played for the eighth and final time this week at Detroit Golf Club.

Rocket Companies, the Detroit-based mortgage lender founded by Detroit billionaire booster Dan Gilbert, decided last month to end its decade-plus run as a title sponsor on the tour amid uncertainty over the changing landscape of the tour and its scheduling.

After months of negotiations, Rocket declined to exercise its option for 2027, bringing an end to the first and only annual PGA Tour stop to be played within the city limits.

"It's been amazing to see what they've been able to build," said Rickie Fowler, who has played in every Rocket Classic, as a longtime pitchman for Rocket, and previously Quicken Loans.

"To be a part of that," added Fowler, who last won on the PGA Tour at the 2023 Rocket, when he dramatically birdied the 18th hole in regulation Sunday and then again in the playoff, "has been a lot of fun."

Said Tony Finau, the 2022 champion: "I'm extremely sad … to not have a tournament back in the 313."

Mark Hollis, Rocket tournament director and formerly the longtime athletic director at Michigan State, has said there will be tears come Sunday night, but before that, he looked forward to putting on a show. It appears like he could deliver, with arguably the best field in the tournament's history.

The Rocket field, thanks in no small part to being the second-to-last regular-season tournament before the start of the PGA Tour playoffs, boasts four players who are in the top 10 of the Official World Golf Ranking and eight in the top 20. More than half of the OWGR top 100 is playing the Rocket.

World No. 3 Cameron Young, who won The Players Championship and Cadillac Championship this year and finished runner-up at the British Open this month, is the highest-ranked player in the field. He has been a regular throughout the years at the Rocket, where he has two top-10s, including a tie for second in 2022.

Cameron Young, who finished second in The Open Championship, is the highest-ranked player, at No. 3, at the Rocket Classic. PHIL NOBLE/REUTERS

"It's been a great place for me," Young said this week. "I've played some nice golf here. I have good memories. I don't know what's going to happen with the future, but it's been a great host."

Speaking of the venue, for the final Rocket Classic, Detroit Golf Club is showing off a $16.1 million renovation that began after the conclusion of last year's Rocket in late June. The Donald Ross greens, which had naturally shrunk over the years, have been raised and expanded (they average 6,700 square feet, from 5,400) to allow for more pin positions; there are more bunkers (over 100 now) and they're deeper, too; fescue has been planted all over the grounds, making the course more penal and aesthetically pleasing; Ross' old cross-ditches have been brought back; and two pushover par-5s have been turned into long par-4s. DGC now will play to a par 70. Players who got an early glimpse at the changes this week are raving about the look and assuring all of us that it will play tougher, if not exactly tough.

Members approved the renovation in 2024, with an eye on hosting many more Rockets. That makes this week a bit bittersweet for the grounds crew, including the head superintendent.

"My staff takes a lot of pride in being able to present a golf course to the nation," Sam Moynihan, DGC's director of agronomy, said Tuesday morning, "and being able to help highlight Detroit Golf Club on a national stage."

Before the first tee shot had been hit at this year's Rocket, the PGA Tour officially announced its replacement for 2027 on Tuesday. A new tournament with a new sponsor, insurance company Sompo, and a familiar venue, Silverardo Resort's North Course, in Napa, California, will take place July 29-Aug. 1, 2027. That Sompo-sponsored tournament will remain on the schedule in 2028 as part of the PGA Tour's new Championship Series, the upper-tier in CEO Brian Rolapp's new two-tier scheduling model. That tournament will move to a new, as-yet-undisclosed location in 2028.

The PGA Tour, though, continues to maintain that the Detroit market remains a priority for the future, and officials are exploring potential new sponsors and possibly new venues.

Even Rocket hasn't completely shut the door on a return one day, though that assuredly won't be in 2027.

"We look at this as a bit of a pause," Nic Barlage, CEO of Rocket Entertainment Group, said recently. "We're not ruling out being back and a part of the PGA Tour again. We're not giving up on golf. We just need a chance to kind of reassess the (golf) landscape."

What the Rocket rarely has lacked is drama. There have been big-name champions, including Fowler, Finau and Bryson DeChambeau, who overpowered the course in 2020 and sheepishly said afterward, "Sorry, Mr. Ross."

And there has been plenty of drama down the stretch on Sundays, with three playoffs, two that lasted five holes, including last year's when then-20 Aldrich Potgieter got his first PGA Tour win.

For now, this is it.

As for the future, well, Detroit's been known for a lot of things, like those wheels – and comebacks.

"I'd love to have an event back here at some point," Fowler said. "Never say never."

PGA TOUR Rocket Classic

Course: Detroit Golf Club (Par 70; 7,328 yards).
Purse: $10 million (winner: $1.8 million).
TV: July 30-31: 3-6 p.m. ET (Golf Channel); Aug. 1-2: 1-3 p.m. ET (Golf Channel) and 3-6 p.m. (CBS, Paramount+).
Streaming (ESPN+): July 30-31: 7 a.m.-6 p.m. ET; Aug. 1-2: 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.
X: @RocketClassic

Inside the numbers

330 The average driving distance on the PGA Tour this season for defending Rocket Classic champion Aldrich Potgieter, which is on pace to set a record. Rory McIlroy holds the mark of 326.3 yards in 2023. Potgieter, 21, led the tour in 2025 at 325. His average currently is more than 15 yards longer than leader J.B. Holmes just 10 years ago.

Keep an eye on

- **Jackson Koivun.** He's coming off a victory at the 3M Open in his third start as a professional. Koivun vaulted from No. 194 to No. 70 in the FedExCup standings and is on the bubble for the Playoffs (only the top 70 qualify) which begins in two weeks. He also is seeking to become the first player since Camilo Villegas at the 2008 Tour Championship to win in their next start after earning their first PGA Tour win.
- **Xander Schauffele.** The two-time major winner is making his tournament debut. On the season, he has earned 1,480 FedExCup points, the fifth most of any player on the PGA Tour this season without a win. He notched his 10th tour title at the Baycurrent Classic in October.
- **Wyndham Clark.** The U.S. Open champion has been on a roll. In his first 12 starts, he recorded four top-25 finishes and no top-10s; in his last seven starts, he finished tied for 13th or better six times and won twice.

FOR THE RECORD

All times ET

MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	62	44	.585	–
N.Y. Yankees	61	46	.570	1½
Boston	55	51	.519	7
Baltimore	52	56	.481	11
Toronto	49	59	.454	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	55	51	.519	–
Cleveland	55	54	.505	1½
Minnesota	54	54	.500	2
Detroit	51	57	.472	5
Kansas City	45	63	.417	11

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	55	52	.514	–
Houston	54	55	.495	2
Seattle	53	55	.491	2½
Athletics	45	62	.421	10
L.A. Angels	42	66	.389	13½

NATIONAL LEAGUE

East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	62	44	.585	–
Philadelphia	57	51	.528	6
Washington	55	53	.509	8
Miami	54	54	.500	9
N.Y. Mets	45	62	.421	17½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	67	40	.626	–
Chicago Cubs	61	46	.570	6
Pittsburgh	55	53	.509	12½
St. Louis	53	54	.495	14
Cincinnati	50	56	.472	16½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	67	40	.626	–
Arizona	56	52	.519	11½
San Diego	54	53	.505	13
San Francisco	45	62	.421	22
Colorado	42	66	.389	25½

Tuesday's Scores
Cleveland 6, Cincinnati 5
Detroit 14, Baltimore 0
Texas 4, Tampa Bay 1
Miami 1, Philadelphia 0
Arizona 8, Pittsburgh 7, 12 innings
Washington 8, Toronto 6
Cincinnati 2, Cleveland 0
N.Y. Yankees 3, Chi. White Sox 2
Minnesota 3, Kansas City 2
Chicago Cubs 10, St. Louis 2
Houston 3, L.A. Angels 2
Athletics 4, Boston 3
San Diego 8, Colorado 7
Milwaukee 8, San Francisco 2
Seattle 7, L.A. Dodgers 6
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets, PPD Rain

Wednesday's Games
Philadelphia at Miami
Arizona at Pittsburgh
Toronto at Washington
Baltimore at Detroit
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets
Milwaukee at San Francisco
Colorado at San Diego
Texas at Tampa Bay
Cleveland at Cincinnati
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox
Kansas City at Minnesota
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis
Houston at L.A. Angels
Boston at Athletics
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers

Thursday's Games
Texas at Tampa Bay, 12:10 p.m.
Kansas City at Minnesota, 1:40 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox, 2:10 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 7:10 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Washington at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Boston at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
San Francisco at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Friday's Games
N.Y. Yankees at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 6:10 p.m.
Philadelphia at Baltimore, 7:05 p.m.
St. Louis at Toronto, 7:07 p.m.
Chi. White Sox at Tampa Bay, 7:10 p.m.
Arizona at Cleveland, 7:10 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Washington at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Texas at Houston, 8:15 p.m.
Kansas City at Colorado, 8:40 p.m.
Milwaukee at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Detroit at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
San Francisco at San Diego, 9:45 p.m.
Minnesota at Seattle, 10:10 p.m.
Boston at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
St. Louis at Toronto, 3:07 p.m.
Chi. White Sox at Tampa Bay, 4:10 p.m.
Minnesota at Seattle, 4:10 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Mets, 4:10 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 6:40 p.m.
Philadelphia at Baltimore, 7:05 p.m.
Texas at Houston, 7:10 p.m.
Washington at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Arizona at Cleveland, 7:15 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chicago Cubs, 7:15 p.m.
Kansas City at Colorado, 8:10 p.m.
San Francisco at San Diego, 8:40 p.m.
Boston at L.A. Dodgers, 9:10 p.m.
Milwaukee at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Detroit at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	12	2	3	39	33	12
Inter Miami CF	11	2	4	37	43	30
New England	9	5	2	29	26	19
Chicago	8	6	2	26	30	22
NY City FC	7	6	4	25	30	23
Charlotte FC	7	6	4	25	28	25
Cincinnati	6	6	5	23	41	42
NY Red Bulls	6	7	4	22	26	37
D.C. United	5	5	7	22	24	27
Orlando City	6	9	2	20	28	44
Columbus	5	8	4	19	24	26
Toronto FC	3	7	7	16	23	31
CF Montreal	4	10	3	15	22	33
Philadelphia	3	10	4	13	22	31
Atlanta	3	11	3	12	17	30

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	3	3	33	37	16
Los Angeles FC	10	5	3	33	34	18
San Jose	10	4	3	33	35	20
Real Salt Lake	8	6	2	26	28	24
Houston	8	6	2	26	23	24
FC Dallas	7	5	5	26	32	25
Saint Louis	7	6	4	25	23	23
Seattle	7	6	3	24	19	20
Minnesota	6	6	5	23	19	24
Portland	6	8	3	21	31	32
LA Galaxy	5	7	6	21	24	29
San Diego FC	5	7	5	20	31	28
Colorado	6	10	1	19	26	25
Austin FC	4	8	5	17	22	35
Sporting KC	4	11	2	14	18	44

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Wednesday's Game
MLS All-Stars vs Liga MX All-Stars

Friday's Games
Toronto FC at NY City FC, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Nashville at D.C. United, 7:30 p.m.
San Jose at Cincinnati, 7:30 p.m.
Columbus at Inter Miami CF, 7:30 p.m.
Atlanta at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.
New England at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Orlando City at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Los Angeles FC at Vancouver, 7:30 p.m.
Charlotte FC at Chicago, 8:30 p.m.
Houston at Sporting KC, 8:30 p.m.
Real Salt Lake at Saint Louis, 8:30 p.m.
San Diego FC at Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.
Austin FC at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
Seattle at Portland, 10:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at LA Galaxy, 10:30 p.m.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	10	3	3	33	25	12
Gotham	9	3	4	31	21	12
Utah	9	4	3	30	26	17
San Diego	9	6	2	29	23	19
Portland	8	5	4	28	27	20
Kansas City	8	7	1	25	23	23
Orlando	7	8	2	23	22	21
Angel City	7	7	1	22	23	16
North Carolina	6	6	3	21	21	23
Seattle	6	7	2	20	17	19
Denver	5	6	4	19	21	20
Houston	5	7	4	19	19	24
Boston	5	8	4	19	18	23
Bay	5	7	3	18	16	20
Chicago	4	12	0	12	8	31
Louisville	3	10	2	11	18	28

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

PRO GOLF ON TV

LPGA: AIG Women's Open

TV: July 30-31: 4-8 a.m. ET (Golf Channel) and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. (USA); Aug. 1-2: 7 a.m.-noon (USA) and Noon-2 p.m. (NBC)

PGA Tour Champions: Portugal Invitational

TV: July 31-Aug. 2: 9 a.m.-noon ET (Golf Channel)

Wednesday's Games
Louisville at Kansas City
Washington at Utah
Gotham at Bay

Friday's Game
Orlando at North Carolina, 8 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Chicago at Louisville, 4 p.m.
Angel City at Kansas City, 6:30 p.m.
Gotham at Houston, 8 p.m.
Seattle at Bay, 8:45 p.m.

Sunday's Games
San Diego at Washington, 4 p.m.
Portland at Utah, 7 p.m.
Boston at Denver, 9 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	18	10	.643	–
Atlanta	16	10	.615	1
N.Y. Liberty	16	12	.571	2
Washington	15	12	.556	2½
Toronto	10	17	.370	7½
Chicago	9	18	.333	8½
Connecticut	7	21	.250	11

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	23	6	.793	–
Las Vegas	19	8	.704	3
Golden State	19	8	.704	3
Dallas	18	9	.667	4
Portland	11	17	.393	11½
L.A. Sparks	10	17	.370	12
Phoenix	10	18	.357	12½
Seattle	6	24	.200	17½

Tuesday's Scores
Washington 92, Connecticut 84
Minnesota 100, Toronto 93
Indiana 105, Seattle 95
Las Vegas 98, Portland 83
N.Y. Liberty 113, L.A. Sparks 109

Wednesday's Games
Atlanta at Dallas
Golden State at Phoenix

Thursday's Games
Minnesota at Toronto, 8 p.m.
Connecticut at Chicago, 8 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games
Seattle at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.
Dallas at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
Indiana at Portland, 10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Las Vegas at Chicago, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Phoenix, 3 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Indiana at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
L.A. Sparks at Portland, 3:30 p.m.
Connecticut at Dallas, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Golden State, 8:30 p.m.

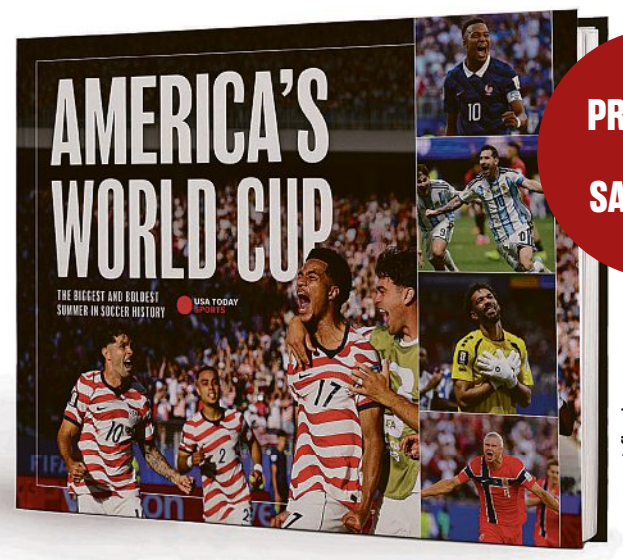
DEALS

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball
ATLANTA BRAVES – AJ Smith-Shawver Removed From 60-Day IL Recovery from right elbow surgery. AJ Smith-Shawver Recalled From Minors Rehab.
BOSTON RED SOX – 2B Nick Sogard Called Up from Minors. 3B Curtis Mead Placed on 10-Day IL Fractured left wrist.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS – Trevor Williams Removed From 60-Day IL Recovery from right elbow surgery. Trevor Williams Recalled From Minors Rehab.
HOCKEY
National Hockey League
NEW JERSEY DEVILS – D Topias Vilen Re-Signed One-year, two-way contract.
SAN JOSE SHARKS – C Macklin Celebrini Contract extended Five-year contract extension.
TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS – G Vyacheslav Peksa Signed with European team Ak Bars Kazan-KHL.

CELEBRATE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST

SOCCER PARTY

EVER WITH THIS HARDCOVER COLLECTOR'S BOOK



PREORDER AND SAVE 20%

cover not final

$31.95 reg. $39.95

plus tax & shipping • offer expires Oct. 14, 2026 • books ship Nov. 30, 2026

The world came to North America in the summer of 2026 — and the beautiful game will never be the same. "**AMERICA'S WORLD CUP**" captures the biggest and boldest World Cup ever staged, a seven-week spectacle that celebrated the passion, pageantry and power of the global game. Relive the thrilling comebacks, dramatic upsets, unforgettable goals and epic moments that captivated fans from every corner of the globe. And it all happened here, in packed U.S. stadiums from coast-to-coast during the country's 250th birthday and at iconic venues with our neighbors to the north and south. USA TODAY set up shop at every host city so that "**AMERICA'S WORLD CUP**" could provide behind-the-scenes storytelling and dynamic photography. It's a keepsake from a once-in-a-lifetime event, a must-have for every soccer fan. Save 20% when you preorder early! Books ship November 2026 in time for holiday gift-giving.

Preorder online at
WorldCup.USATbook.com

USA TODAY SPORTS

Daydream of SEC, B1G, power expansion

Matt Hayes
College football columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Big Ten Conference Commissioner Tony Petitti speaks during Media Days at Hilton Chicago on July 28. KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

Let's state the obvious right out of the gate: This all depends on the inglorious trifecta of Congress, Tony Petitti and Greg Sankey agreeing on groundbreaking legislation.

And they're not exactly the most simpatico group on the planet.

But since the latest iteration of the Protect College Sports Act leaked on July 28 in late Tuesday afternoon, we can at least daydream about the most intriguing piece within the legislation – one that's lost amid the inside baseball that nearly every fan couldn't care two nickels about.

The bill – which still technically needs a blessing from commissioners of the SEC (Sankey) and Big Ten (Petitti) – will cap conference membership at 19 schools and requires schools moving from one power conference to another to play five years as an independent before moving.

On its face, that looks like a dealbreaker for most schools looking to move. But look a little deeper, everyone.

Live sports is the one guaranteed money-printing entity for network television and streaming sites. They can't get enough of it, especially if it's the NFL or college football.

Which leads us to this intriguing fork in the road: Which current power conference teams could go into the five-year exile of independent status and survive? Which has the brand power to earn an independent network or streaming media rights deal to financially hold them over until joining the Big Ten or SEC?

The Big Ten currently has 18 schools and can expand by one under the bill's proposal. The SEC has 16 and can expand by three.

A five-year exile would mean potential conference realignment would begin with the 2032 season, assuming specific provisions of the bill won't be challenged in court – which could lead to a much quicker realignment.

But that doesn't mean we can't dream.

Which college would be able to go independent?

The brands that can survive as independents (and have a legitimate shot at landing a survivable network or streaming independent media rights deal): North Carolina, Duke, Miami and Florida State.

The brands that have enough money to go independent, and try to convince the Big Ten or SEC of their value while playing without a significant media rights deal: Texas Tech, SMU, Stanford, Cal.

The brand that isn't joining a conference (so stop asking): Notre Dame.

The Big Ten

It's one and done. But where does the Big Ten look? At the best brand (North Carolina), or best fit (Stanford or Cal)?

North Carolina is the smart choice, but Southern Cal, UCLA, Washington and Oregon likely would push for another West Coast team to relieve travel expenditures. The Big Ten presidents – who will make the decision – could have had both Stanford and Cal in the last expansion, and passed.

But where does North Carolina feel it fits best?

The Big Ten move: Stanford. After UNC declares intentions to stay in the South, the best conference in college sports takes the best all sports program in the country. And gives a little travel relief to all involved.

The SEC

The league's presidents have said over and over they won't expand just to expand. But if North Carolina is sitting out there, and they've made it clear they want the SEC over the Big Ten, it's a no-brainer.

Now here's where it gets tricky. The last thing the SEC wants to do is add Florida State and Miami – and damage its relationship with Florida.

Because Florida could survive on its own for five years with an individual media rights deal.

And if the bluest of blue bloods Florida is on the market, guess where the Big Ten is headed?

So the guess here is the SEC adds Duke in addition to North Carolina, and caps it at 18 teams. North Carolina and Duke were two schools former SEC commissioner Mike Slive had eyes on in 2012 after the conference added Texas A&M and Missouri – but it never unfolded.

The ACC

In this scenario, the ACC is the big loser. Gone are linchpins North Carolina and Duke and newbie Stanford. That leaves the conference with 14 teams, and the idea of adding another mouth to feed doesn't happen unless it's a guaranteed hammer in future media rights negotiations.

The conference would first have to transition Miami, FSU, SMU and Cal back into the fold after five years in exile (or less, if the courts get involved). Adding another school(s) – UConn, Memphis, South Florida, Houston? – may not be high priority.

The Big 12

No subtractions (no surprise), and no additions. Other than welcoming Texas Tech back into the fold, before the ACC gets smart and adds another Texas school.

Can't blame the Red Raiders. The other 15 schools would have tried it, too, if they had the financial wherewithal.

Matt Hayes is the senior national college football writer for USA TODAY Sports Network. Follow him on X at @MattHayesCFB

Kyle Shanahan admits blame in car crash

Nick Brinkerhoff
USA TODAY

More details continue to emerge surrounding a car accident involving Kyle Shanahan.

The San Francisco 49ers announced the head coach's crash in a statement on July 25, nearly two weeks after it happened. Shanahan suffered "non-life threatening injuries" and will be limited as the Niners begin training camp. Those injuries were revealed to be broken ribs, a broken nose, some "bumps and bruises" and a concussion.

Pro Football Talk's Chris Simms, a close friend of Shanahan's, shared more details during the July 27 episode of the PFT Live podcast.

"It was scary," Simms explained to his co-host, Mike Florio. "All of a sudden, one day, I get a text from Kyle's wife Mandy – she texts myself and my wife – and it's like 'Oh no, Kyle's been a part of some horrible accident.' She sent us some pictures right off the bat, and it was like 'Oh my gosh.' "

Simms called the images jarring, indicating just how close the injuries were to being much worse.

"He was this close to maybe losing his right eye," Simms added. "The scar is so big right here. So, all that stuff was just crazy to see."

Simms also noted the head coach is still shaken up and realizes how lucky he was to avoid further damage.

Coach takes the blame for car accident

Shanahan revealed details about the crash to a select group of reporters in his office on July 28.

The head coach told the group he was at fault for the accident. Shanahan explained that California Highway Patrol had a "clerical error attributing accident" to the other driver, which was not accurate.

Palo Alto Police confirmed Shanahan's explanation in a statement released to ESPN. "Kyle Shanahan's statement that he provided is correct and that he was found at fault for the collision," the statement read. "There was a clerical error in the preparation of the report that was transmitted to the State database. We are in the process of correcting that error. It is the officer's discretion at the scene of the collision as to whether they issue a citation to either party. It is not uncommon for officers to elect to not issue a citation to either party involved in a collision. Neither party in this situation was provided preferential treatment."

Shanahan said he took his eyes off the road briefly to find his phone, which fell between seats. When he looked up, he had gone over the line and crashed into an SUV.

Shanahan said he did not lose consciousness or have amnesia following the accident.

When will Shanahan return?

Shanahan's timeline for a return is dependent on his recovery from the concussion, which could put his Week 1 status in doubt.

John Lynch, San Francisco's president of football operations and general manager, expressed some optimism about Shanahan's recovery, telling reporters they aren't expecting him to miss the season opener.

"That's not what we're anticipating," Lynch said. "That's not what I've heard from the doctors, but you know, just like we talk about with players, the timeline kind of takes care of itself. So he's got to meet certain markers, but I think the expectation is that long before that he'll be better. But again, everybody responds to these things differently.'

Who is replacing Shanahan?

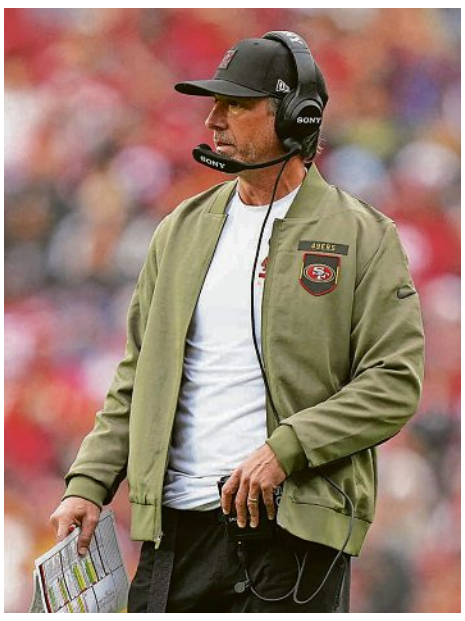
Chris Foerster, the 49ers' assistant head coach, will handle the head coaching position while Shanahan is out. The 49ers announced that the team coordinators are also set to take on some responsibilities during the head coach's absence.

Foerster has been with the Niners since 2019, holding a variety of titles during that time. He has been primarily an offensive line coach since entering the NFL ranks in 1993 with the Minnesota Vikings.

The 64-year-old met with the media for the first time on July 26 and shared the message he received from Shanahan.

"I had the one conversation, and I think what he said to me was, 'Hey, you do whatever you want. I have a lot of confidence in you. You know how we do things. You do whatever you want to do, and if you don't want to do it, delegate it to somebody else, man,' " Foerster said. "He said, 'You do what you feel is right and lead that way.' And he said, 'I trust that anything you want to do, and anything you want to delegate, delegate.' "

Foerster said he learned of his new role when the team released the statement about Shanahan. While he explained that he's fired up for the opportunity, Foerster added that the Shanahan news was difficult to process.



49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan looks on during the first quarter in a game against the Titans at Levi's Stadium. KYLE TERADA/IMAGN IMAGES

"The thing is, he's family to me, this whole organization," Foerster said. "I've known Kyle for a long time. He's one of my best friends in the world, by far. There's not many people that I call friend, for a lot of reasons, and Kyle is one of them. He and his wife, Mandy, are like family to me. This organization did some things for me and pulled me in at a time in my life when nobody would really want to be with me. And Kyle along with John and the whole York family have stood by me, and that loyalty is never going to be forgotten.

"He's a close, close friend, and it scares the crap out of you when something like this happens to somebody so close."

Robert Saleh thankful Shanahan is OK

Saleh, the head coach of the Tennessee Titans and former defensive coordinator under Shanahan, commented on the crash.

"I talked to him a couple days after it happened," Saleh said, via Nick Suss of The Tennessean, part of the USA TODAY Network. "He's very fortunate. We're all very fortunate that he's still here. I know just talking to him and his wife, Mandy. (What) you see now, isn't what it was two weeks ago.

"Thank God he's OK. Thank God his family is intact. He's doing great. He looks great. Saw him on FaceTime a couple days ago. The surgeon did a great job. Not easy for him to go through what he went through."

Rams head coach Sean McVay shares 'thoughts and prayers'

Sean McVay and Shanahan might be rivals on the field, but they are friends first.

At the Rams' first day of training camp on July 25, McVay revealed that he spoke with Shanahan after the coach's crash.

"Most importantly, thank God he and the other person involved is OK," McVay said. "Perspective is everything. We talk about that all the time as coaches and everybody goes through different things. I think the most important thing is that he's on the road to recovery."

49ers GM John Lynch comments

Lynch spoke about the crash and Shanahan's status during a press conference on July 25.

"Kyle is doing good. He's got some bumps and bruises. He did suffer a concussion in the accident, has some lingering effects from that concussion," Lynch said. "We're going to let the condition, the doctors, dictate how he comes back, when he comes back. He's been in the building, so we've seen him.

"It's kind of like we do with our players, a phased back approach. Number one for Kyle and the Shanahan family is getting him back right. He's a tremendous head coach, but this is bigger than that. This is about his well-being and we're going to take the time necessary and I think we're very equipped to do that."

Lynch indicated that it will be a community effort to replace Shanahan for now, with all the coordinators taking on some added responsibility.

"We're not going to blink," Lynch said. "We feel like we're well-equipped for something like this. We understand what a tremendous leader we have in Kyle. Chris Foerster ... knows Kyle inside and out, what Kyle wants, what Kyle needs.

"I think one of the great things Kyle does, aside from coaching his team, is leading this organization and I think he's a tremendous developer of his staff and so we're not going to miss a beat."

49ers statement

"San Francisco 49ers Head Coach Kyle Shanahan was involved in a car accident last week where he suffered non-life-threatening injuries. Coach Shanahan will participate in team activities on a limited basis at the start of training camp while he recovers," the team said in a statement.

Bell

Continued from Page 1C

Patrick Mahomes injury update

It was telling that Chiefs coach Andy Reid won't even rule out playing Mahomes in the preseason. That decision is for another day, and Reid is quick to maintain that they are still operating on a day-by-day assessment.

When someone asked about the Week 1 target that Mahomes has always had in sight, Reid said, "You've got to see how things go there. Let's just see where we're at and not make any predictions or anything else."

Still, Reid, whose team stumbled to 6-11 last season as the Chiefs missed the playoffs for the first time since 2014, knows how his quarterback is wired better than any of us. I'd suspect that even if he doesn't want to risk a setback during the preseason, there's no need to declare anything definitive now. If I'm Reid, I'm pushing whatever buttons will keep the flow of this mojo moving.

Mahomes knows. This is not about being ready to rock for the preseason.

"We'll just see when we get there," he said. "Like, I'm a competitor, so, like game day, I'm gonna want to be out there. But I understand the process of getting myself ready in the regular season is more important, but we will see. I mean, the coaches and doctors will kind of make that decision for me, but I'll prepare myself like I'm going to play. And then if I'm doing a 'very hard warm-up,' I will take that as serious as playing in the preseason game."

Listen to Mahomes and it is so apparent that recovering physically from such a serious injury constitutes just one significant portion of a comeback. It's mental, too.

He reached out to Tom Brady for advice. It's a striking coincidence that Mahomes, whose résumé includes three Super Bowl rings, suffered his severe knee injury in his ninth season. Brady had won three Super Bowls, too, when he suffered a similar injury. It's probably a given that Mahomes has connected with his former teammate, Tyreek Hill, over the course of his rehab. Hill, currently a free agent, is rehabbing from a dislocated kneecap and torn ACL and LCL.

Turning recovery into competition

Then there's Zach Ertz, the free agent tight end who suffered a torn ACL a week before Mahomes was injured while playing with the Commanders. Mahomes and Ertz (who was once coached by Mahomes' college coach, Kliff Kingsbury) have struck quite a supportive bond with each other during their rehabs.

"We kind of had like competitions on where we were at and where we were rehabbing," Mahomes said.

After they compared notes on how much they could dead lift in the weight room, Mahomes said, the "competition" advanced to include video exchanges. Ertz sent Mahomes a video showing his explosion in drills jumping on a box; Mahomes sent Ertz footage that captured him cutting to change direction.

"And so, it keeps the competition going," Mahomes said. "It's a long process and you feel like sometimes you're lonely because you're just doing stuff by yourself and you're just competing against yourself. So, it gave me someone else that I can compete with to kind of push my competitive drive."

Mahomes, given his abundance of competitive juice, mentioned "how much it hurt me" to watch the Chiefs' final three games last season without him.

Yet that wasn't the hardest element of his setback to deal with mentally.

The toughest part?

"Honestly, the toughest part was at the beginning, like, not being able to get up and chase my kids around," Mahomes, father of three, said, reflecting

Quarterback Patrick Mahomes hands off to new Chiefs running back Kenneth Walker during mandatory minicamp. DENNY MEDLEY/IMAGN IMAGES

on the holiday season that came shortly after his Dec. 15 surgery. "Like, I know it sounds crazy, but being a dad and being an active dad, I always want to be around my kids and playing and stuff like that. And so, I think that was tough. Once I was able to do that, it kind of motivated me to kind of keep getting better. So, when Bronze (Patrick III) plays a T-ball game or Sterling's playing soccer, I can be out there with them.

"I always knew that I was going to get back here. And it's just because of my mindset and the people that we have around me."

More mental challenges – or at least markers – loom. As much as Mahomes has something to prove with his performance – he aims to get the ball out of his hand quicker and expects to run less after posting a career-high 422 rushing yards last season – at some point he will take a hit on the knee.

Of course, as was the case during offseason workouts, that won't happen during training camp as the quarterbacks, clad in yellow jerseys, are off-limits.

"We've had people kind of on air coming at me and you're moving, but it's not the same as having Chris Jones chasing after you, you know?" said Mahomes, who will start off wearing a brace on the knee but hasn't been told whether he will need to wear it for an extended period.

Whenever he takes a hit, it'll be another marker.

"You'll never know until you get out there and you get hit and you make plays," he said. "But I trust the process I've been through."

Until last season, the most time Mahomes missed during his NFL career came in 2019, when he missed two games due to a dislocated knee. Like now, he returned at an accelerated pace – which undoubtedly says something about how he's physically wired to recover at a pace that is not typical.

He reflected wistfully of a marker upon his return in 2019 that indicated he was fully back. It came on a play when he improvised while trying to avoid a rush to throw a pass. And it clearly provided some perspective to draw on in the coming weeks.

"I have that throw where I jump and throw the ball and it looks cool, but I actually did it because I was running my knee out of there," he recalled. "So, it's just little things like that, you just have to build that confidence back.

"I'm glad you could do that from day one of training camp. You know, I didn't want to have to get only a couple weeks of practicing and then have to go play in a game. I wanted to build it up."

In other words, get ready to roll out the red carpet and strike up the band.

Follow Jarrett Bell on X: @JarrettBell

NCAA

Continued from Page 1C

advertising and sponsorship for some time now. The NCAA will continue to prohibit sports betting and daily fantasy advertising."

The NCAA also is allowing more alcohol ads than before

The NCAA previously banned advertising during its championship events for alcohol products that exceeded 6% alcohol by volume (ABV), which included many beer products but excluded liquor and many wines.

The NCAA also previously restricted beer ads to be no longer than 60 seconds per hour of NCAA championship programming. Now there is no ABV limit. And the alcohol commercial limit has expanded to up to 120 seconds per hour, effective July 1.

At the same time the change marks the latest twist in a long, strange history between the NCAA and energy drinks, which still are forbidden in another way. NCAA schools aren't allowed to provide them to student-athletes because caffeine is listed as a banned stimulant that could cause a player to flunk an NCAA drug test if consumed in high quantities.

Why the NCAA changed its advertising policies

It's about money. The NCAA is getting an extra $300 million from television companies over the next six years because they agreed to expand the NCAA basketball tournaments.

To be able to pay for a bigger March Madness, a television company such as Warner Bros. Discovery needed to be able to sell more commercials for it – a job that becomes much easier and more lucrative if energy drinks and liquor products are allowed to be included.

Warner Bros. Discovery previously televised early-round men's tournament games on truTV and stands to benefit from the change, as will CBS (which also televises the men's tournament) and ESPN (which televises the women's tournament).

The NCAA confirmed its advertising policy became part of the negotiations to expand the basketball tournaments as a result. The final contract was approved by several NCAA panels, including the Division I men's and women's basketball committees.

The NCAA agreed to the change in part because the NCAA now will be able to award more than $131 million in new revenue distributions to member schools that participate in the basketball tournaments over the final six years of the NCAA's broadcast agreements.

"The rapidly accelerating need to feed the financial beast continues to lead the NCAA and its business partners to increased commercialization," said David Carter, founder of the Sports Business Group. "This hasn't just been the case with college sports as pro sports has also found itself embracing advertising and sponsorship categories once deemed inappropriate or illegal like alcohol and gambling."

What does this NCAA advertising policy change affect?

The NCAA said it allowed energy drink ads on a trial basis for the 2026 men's and women's basketball tournaments before the ban was permanently lifted July 1. The lifting of the ban applies only to television advertising during NCAA championship events such as the basketball tournaments, the Frozen Four in hockey and the College World Series in baseball and softball.

Individual schools and conferences previously were not subject to this ban. For example, the Celsius energy drink company has had sponsorships with Oregon, Colorado, Washington and others. In 2024, Buckeye Vodka became a sponsor of Ohio State athletics. The Big 12 Conference on July 7 announced an "entitlement" sponsorship with the Monster Energy drink company that was not related to the lifting of the separate NCAA ban for NCAA championship events.

Likewise, college athletes were not banned from endorsement deals with energy drink companies, such as the one between Colorado football star Travis Hunter and Celsius.

Why the NCAA previously banned liquor and energy drink ads

The NCAA wanted to promote healthy values for its member schools and athletes. Hard alcohol and energy drinks didn't jibe with that.

The NCAA's advertising policy states it is "designed to encourage those advertisements and advertisers that support the NCAA's ideals and exclude those advertisements and advertisers ... that do not appear to be in the best interests of higher education and student-athletes."

In 2016, Mary Wilfert, then-associate director of the NCAA's Sport Science Institute, gave an online presentation to athletic trainers and athletic department staff. The presentation warned them about energy drinks, saying too many of such drinks could contribute to gastric upset, sleep disturbances and heart palpitations.

"The energy drink buzz is a false energy," read one of the slides presented by Wilfert.

That time when a bowl game was canceled because of it

The International Bowl in Toronto went out of business after its last game in 2010 because the NCAA forbade a title sponsorship of the game by 5-Hour Energy, the game's chief executive told USA TODAY Sports.

The College Football Playoff and Pac-12 Networks also canceled an ad campaign with energy drink Xyience in 2016 after receiving questions about it from USA TODAY Sports. Back then, they didn't want to appear out of step with NCAA guidelines even though they technically weren't required to abide by them. Such a stance now appears quaint by today's standards.

Energy drinks "have become so endemic to the college experience and beyond, the marketing fit – and the money that comes with it – is just to tempting to pass up," said Carter of the Sports Business Group. "And the fact that there is likely to be modest pushback from the public at large should lead to even broader acceptance of energy drinks as marketing partners throughout college athletics."

Such products still can't advertise at NCAA championships

The NCAA confirmed that such previously banned products still are not allowed to advertise at NCAA championships with onsite signage. Nor can those companies be an official NCAA sponsor.

Onsite signage is exclusive to official NCAA sponsors, which includes Coca-Cola.

An energy drink would not be eligible to be an official NCAA sponsor because of Coca-Cola's exclusivity with beverage products, the NCAA confirmed.

The lifting of the ban therefore applies to TV commercials during NCAA championship events.

And that's where the likes of CBS and TNT will quench their thirsts to pay for a bigger March Madness.

But there are still limits to what can be in their commercials.

With alcohol advertising, the NCAA still requires TV ads be "respectful" and "free of gratuitous and overly suggestive sexual innuendo" and with "no displays of disorderly, reckless or destructive behavior."

Follow reporter Brent Schrotenboer @Schrotenboer.

Email: bschrotenb@usatoday.com

Dodgers

Continued from Page 1C

utility player Tommy Edman and outfielder Kevin Kiermaier.

The Dodgers were 63-46 (.578) before the trade deadline and 35-18 (.660) after it. Flaherty and Kopech strengthened the Dodgers' pitching in the regular season, going a combined 10-2, with Kopech taking on a high-leverage role in relief.

But Edman wound up the postseason hero. He won the National League championship series MVP award, batting .407 with 11 hits, one home run, 11 RBIs and five runs in six games against the New York Mets and the Dodgers won the series four games to two.

In the World Series, the Dodgers beat the New York Yankees in five games. Kopech made 12 postseason appearances and Flaherty started five games in the playoff run.

2025: Depth at the deadline

For the Dodgers in 2025, the club generated even less buzz at the trade deadline.

Los Angeles picked up three minor leaguers (pitcher Adam Serwinowski along with outfielders Zach Ehrhard and James Tibbs III), outfielder Alex Call, pitchers Paul Gervase and Brock Stewart and catcher Ben Rortvedt.

The Dodgers went 63-46 (.578) before the deadline and 30-23 (.566) after the deadline.

There was no Tommy Edman among this group. But the depth proved vital for the Dodgers with Rortvedt starting four playoff games as catcher Will Smith dealt with injury, while Call made three starts in the outfield.

The Dodgers went on to win the World Series, prevailing over the Toronto Blue Jays with a heart-stopping fashion, extra-inning victory in Game 7.

How Dodgers do business

The Dodgers have made significant upgrades with the trade deadline over the last decade. The acquisitions included pitcher Yu Darvish in 2017, when he was a four-time All-Star; shortstop Manny Machado in 2018, when he was a four-time All-Star; pitcher Max Sherzer in 2021, when he was a seven-time All-Star; and shortstop Trea Turner in 2021, who won the NL batting title that year.

But none of those additions led to World Series rings, and the Dodgers have assembled their most fruitful rosters through other methods.

The Dodgers used free agency to sign first baseman Freddie Freeman, pitcher Yoshinobu Yamamoto, pitcher Blake Snell, Ohtani (designated hitter/pitcher) and Tucker, the outfielder.

Though winter trades, the Dodgers acquired shortstop Mookie Betts and pitcher Tyler Glasnow.

WNBA AWARD PREDICTIONS

Wilson, Miles lead the front-runners

Cydney Henderson
USA TODAY

Lynx G Olivia Miles dribbles vs. Aces C A'ja Wilson. Both are MVP hopefuls. Miles should be Rookie of the Year. STEPHEN R. SYLVANIE/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

Aces center A'ja Wilson reacts after scoring against the Fever.
LUCAS PELTIER/IMAGN IMAGES

The 2026 WNBA All-Star Game is in the books and the push for the playoffs has officially begun.

The Minnesota Lynx are sitting atop the WNBA standings, led by dynamic rookie guard Olivia Miles, who became the first player in WNBA history to record 400 points, 100 rebounds and 100 assists in 22 games. She has not only emerged as the Rookie of the Year front-runner but has also entered the MVP conversation. (Candace Parker is the only player in league history to win Rookie of the Year and MVP in the same season in 2008.)

Las Vegas Aces center A'ja Wilson, however, would like a word. It's hard to consistently top yourself, but the four-time MVP continues to dominate on both sides of the basketball. Wilson's former college coach, South Carolina's Dawn Staley, predicted Wilson will become the league's first five-time MVP.

"When you see great players get better each and every year, that's hard to do. It's easy when you're an average player ... you can see that growth. But when you see the great ones get better each and every year, it's not talked about enough," Staley said of Wilson, whose Aces are within striking distance of the No. 1 overall seed.

As play resumes on the final third of the 2026 WNBA season, USA TODAY Sports' Studio IX is taking a look at who might be in line for awards come September. Here are our predictions:

WNBA MVP: A'ja Wilson, Las Vegas Aces

Wilson has emerged as the favorite to win MVP, which should shock no one. Wilson is flirting with her career high, averaging a league-leading 26.1 points per game in her ninth season. Wilson's stat line is rounded out by 9.5 rebounds, which is tied for fourth place in the league. She's recorded double-digit points in every game this season (24 starts), including an efficient 45-point performance against the Connecticut Sun on May 15. She's grabbed at least 15 rebounds five times this season and her 12 double-doubles ranks third overall. Wilson's usage rate is the highest in the league (32.1) and she's accounted for nearly a third of the team's made field goals this season (33.9%). Should we keep going? Wilson has positioned the defending champions to make another run at the title at 18-8 on the season.

Others receiving votes: Paige Bueckers, G, Dallas; Olivia Miles, G, Minnesota; Caitlin Clark, G, Indiana

WNBA DPOY: A'ja Wilson, Las Vegas Aces

Wilson has won MVP and Defensive Player of the Year in the same season twice (2022, 2025). Can she make it three?

Wilson leads the league in blocks (2.0 per game) and is fifth in rebounds (9.6 per game), the third highest mark of her career. As the anchor of the Aces' defense, Wilson had helped Las Vegas maintain a 103.8 defensive rating across Las Vegas' last five games (third in the WNBA).

Others receiving votes: Rhyne Howard, G, Atlanta; Angel Reese, F, Atlanta; Shakira Austin, C, Washington; Gabby Williams, F, Golden State

WNBA Rookie of the Year: Olivia Miles, Minnesota Lynx

Miles' debut has been nothing short of historic. The No. 2 overall pick in the 2026 WNBA Draft leads all rookies in points (19.3 ppg), made field goals (6.8) and assists (6.0). She's scored double-digits in all 26 games to start her career, including a career-high 33 points against Phoenix earlier this season. Miles was named an All-Star starter, the only rookie to earn the honor this season. "(Miles) doing this and shouldering so much, basically ... the success of the team is on her shoulders and that is impressive how she's handled it," Lynx coach Cheryl Reeve said.

Others receiving votes: Azzi Fudd, G, Dallas; Awa Fam, C, Seattle; Sydney Taylor, G, Chicago; Flau'jae Johnson, G, Seattle

WNBA Most improved: Jessica Shepard, Dallas Wings

After spending five seasons in Minnesota, Shepard found a new home and expanded role in Dallas after signing with the Wings in free agency. Shepard ranks second in scoring for the Wings through 27 games (all starts) and averaged a career-high 14.9 points per game, besting her previous high of 8.1 points per game in 2019. She also set career highs in assists (5.4) and rebounds (12), which leads the entire league. Shepard owns four of the five triple-doubles this season. Her career-best year was rewarded with her first All-Star nod, being voted as a starter, no less. An award for Most Improved Player is likely next.

Others receiving votes: Marina Mabrey, G, Toronto; Carla Leite, G, Portland; Aneesah Morrow, F, Connecticut; Dominique Malonga, C, Seattle

WNBA Sixth Player of the Year: Janelle Salaün, Golden State Valkyries

Salaün has been explosive off the bench for Golden State, averaging a career-high 12.5 points for the Valkyries. Golden State has the highest scoring bench in the league (35.4 points per game) and Salaün's 345 total points off the bench lead the way. Salaün is shooting 41.1% from the field and a blistering 39.4% from 3-point line, which both mark career highs. "I'm just trying to bring energy whenever I come on the court," Salaün said. Well, mission accomplished. The Valkyries are second in the standings at 19-8 and will likely set a new franchise record of wins.

Others receiving votes: Sophie Cunningham, G, Indiana; Jewell Loyd, G, Las Vegas; Kaitlyn Chen, G, Golden State; Rae Burrell, G, Los Angeles

WNBA Coach of the Year: Cheryl Reeve, Minnesota Lynx

Reeve

Reeve has led the Lynx to new heights since taking over head coaching duties in 2010, guiding the franchise to four WNBA championships in seven Finals appearances to become the all-time winningest coach in WNBA history. Yet, Reeve somehow continues to top herself. This year is especially unique. The Lynx weren't on anyone's radar heading into the season due to injury (five-time All-Star Napheesa Collier) and losing key pieces in free agency (Alanna Smith, Jessica Shepard). But Minnesota has the best record in the league with the second-best defense and third-best overall offense. That's in large part to rookie Olivia Miles, who has seamlessly made the transition to the pros. Collier is back in the lineup after missing the first 27 games, so there's no telling how deep the Lynx can go. Reeve has won Coach of the Year a record four times (2011, 2016, 2020, 2024) and is well on her way to extending her record.

Others receiving votes: Jose Fernandez, Dallas; Natalie Nakase, Golden State

Reach USA TODAY National Women's Sports Reporter Cydney Henderson at chenderson@gannett.com and follow her on X at @CydHenderson

MARKETPLACE TODAY

To view more Classified listings, visit: classifieds.usatoday.com

For advertising information: 1.800.397.0070 www.russelljohns.com/usat

All classified ads are subject to the applicable rate card, copies of which are available from our Advertising Dept. All ads are subject to approval before publication. USA Today reserves the right to edit, refuse, reject, classify or cancel any ad at any time. Errors must be reported in the first day of publication. USA Today shall not be liable for any loss or expense that results from an error in or omission of an advertisement. No refunds for early cancellation of order.

NOTICES — LEGAL NOTICES

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

In re GOLF SERVICES WIND DOWN, LLC, *et al.*, Debtors.[1]	**Chapter 11** Case No. 25-12089 (CTG) (Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF (I) CONDITIONAL APPROVAL OF THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT FOR SOLICITATION PURPOSES ONLY, (II) DEADLINE FOR CASTING VOTES TO ACCEPT OR REJECT THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT, AND (III) THE HEARING TO CONSIDER (A) FINAL APPROVAL OF THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AS CONTAINING ADEQUATE INFORMATION AND (B) CONFIRMATION OF THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. On November 21, 2025, Golf Services Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a GBI Services, LLC), and certain of its affiliates, as debtors and debtors in possession (collectively, the "**Debtors**") commenced voluntary chapter 11 bankruptcy cases with the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware (the "**Court**").

2. On July 16, 2026, the Court entered an order [Docket No. 513] (the "**Conditional Approval and Procedures Order**") conditionally approving the *Debtors' Amended Combined Disclosure Statement and Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Liquidation* [Docket No. 518] (the "**Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement**")[2] for solicitation purposes only.

3. A hearing (the "**Confirmation Hearing**") to consider final approval of the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement as containing adequate information within the meaning of section 1125 of the Bankruptcy Code and confirmation of the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement will be held before The Honorable Craig T. Goldblatt, United States Bankruptcy Judge, on the 3rd floor of the Court, Courtroom 7, 824 North Market Street, Wilmington, DE 19801, **on September 1, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. (Eastern Time)**. The Confirmation Hearing may be continued from time to time without further notice other than the announcement by the Debtors in open court of the adjourned date(s) at the Confirmation Hearing or any continued hearing or as indicated in any notice or agenda filed with the Court.

4. Objections to confirmation of the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement, including any objection to the adequacy of the disclosures, if any, must: (a) be in writing; (b) be filed with the Court by no later than **4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on August 20, 2026**; and (c) served in accordance with the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order.

5. Pursuant to the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order, the Court approved the use of certain materials in the solicitation of votes to accept or reject the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement and certain procedures for the tabulation of votes to accept or reject the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement. If you are a Holder of a Claim against the Debtors as of **July 17, 2026** and are entitled to vote, then you will have received a ballot form (a "**Ballot**") and instructions for completing the Ballot.

6. For a vote to accept or reject the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement to be counted, the Holder of a Claim must complete all required information on the Ballot, execute the Ballot and return the completed Ballot in accordance with the instructions so that it is received by **5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on August 17, 2026** (the "**Voting Deadline**"). Any failure to follow the instructions included with the Ballot or to return a properly completed Ballot so that it is actually received by the Voting Deadline may disqualify such Ballot and vote on the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement. **You may also be eligible to submit a Ballot electronically. If you wish to do so, please visit the following web address and follow the instructions on that web address**: https://dm.epiq11.com/case/nck/info.

7. If a Holder of a Claim wishes to challenge the allowance or disallowance of a Claim for voting purposes, such Holder must file a motion, pursuant to Bankruptcy Rule 3018(a), for an order temporarily allowing its Claim in a different amount or classification for purposes of voting to accept or reject the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan (a "**Rule 3018 Motion**") and serve the Rule 3018 Motion on the Debtors so that it is received no later than **August 6, 2026**. The Debtors, or any other party in interest, shall have until 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on **August 13, 2026** to file and serve any responses to any such Rule 3018 Motion. Unless the Court orders otherwise, such Claim will not be counted for voting purposes in excess of the amount determined in accordance with the Tabulation Procedures.

ARTICLE XII OF THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT CONTAINS RELEASE, EXCULPATION AND INJUNCTION PROVISIONS. THUS, YOU ARE ADVISED TO REVIEW AND CONSIDER THE COMBINED PLAN AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT CAREFULLY BECAUSE YOUR RIGHTS MIGHT BE AFFECTED THEREUNDER.

8. Pursuant to the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order, you may not have received a copy of the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement. However, copies of the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement, the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order, the other materials contained in the Solicitation Packages and any other document filed in the Debtors' chapter 11 cases may be obtained and/or are available for review without charge at the website of Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, (the "**Balloting Agent**"), https://dm.epiq11.com/case/nck/info, or by contacting the Balloting Agent by email, at GBIServicesInfo@epiqglobal.com. Such documents may also be obtained for a fee via PACER at: http://www.deb.uscourts.gov.

Dated: July 22, 2026, Wilmington, Delaware, */s/ James F. McCauley*, RICHARDS, LAYTON & FINGER, P.A., Michael J. Merchant (No. 3854), Zachary I. Shapiro (No. 5103), James F. McCauley (No. 6991), 920 North King Street, Wilmington, Delaware 19801, Telephone: 302-651-7700, Email: merchant@rlf.com, shapiro@rlf.com, mccauley@rlf.com -and- WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES LLP, David J. Cohen (admitted *pro hac vice*), 1395 Brickell Avenue, Suite 1200, Miami, Florida 33131, Telephone: (305) 577-3100, Email: davidj.cohen@weil.com -and- WEIL, GOTSHAL & MANGES LLP, Ronit J. Berkovich (admitted *pro hac vice*), Philip L. DiDonato (admitted *pro hac vice*), 767 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10153, Telephone: (212) 310-8000, Emails: ronit.berkovich@weil.com, philip.didonato@weil.com, *Attorneys for the Debtors and the Debtors in Possession*

[1] The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each Debtor's federal tax identification number, are: Golf Services Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a GBI Services, LLC) (0771), Golf Companies Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Companies, LLC) (5063), Golf-V Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a N1JN-V, LLC) (3178), Golf Real Estate Licensing Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Real Estate Licensing, LLC) (7569), Golf Project Management Services Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Project Management Services, LLC) (6810), Golf Advisory Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Advisory, LLC) (3577), Golf Design Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Design, LLC) (7744), Golf Interactive Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Interactive, LLC) (9584), Golf Brands Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Brands, LLC) (9771), Golf International Brand Management, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus International Brand Management, LLC) (1536), Golf Equipment Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Jack Nicklaus Golf Club, LLC) (9616), and Golf Equipment Company Wind Down, LLC (f/k/a Nicklaus Golf Equipment Company, L.C.) (6669). The Debtors' mailing address is 5500 Military Trail, Ste 22-276, Jupiter, FL 33458.

[2] Capitalized terms used herein and not otherwise defined shall have the meanings given to them in the Combined Plan and Disclosure Statement.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for **Fuel Delivery with Related Services** to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada

Sourcewell encourages the use of Small, Minority-owned, Women's Business Enterprise, Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (S/M/WBE/VBE) suppliers both as prime and subcontractors and encourages the participation of these suppliers in the solicitation process.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than **September 17, 2026 at 3:30 p.m. Central Time**, and late proposals will not be considered.

NOTICES — PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Commercial Card Programs to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than September 10, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

WANT TO ADVERTISE?
ASK US...WE CAN HELP!

Place your advertisement in USA TODAY's Marketplace!

To advertise, call: 800-397-0070
or email: sales@russelljohns.com

Cowboys like their quietly good offseason

Tyler Dragon
USA TODAY

OXNARD, CA – Dak Prescott and CeeDee Lamb's contract situations hung over the Dallas Cowboys two years ago. Micah Parsons' contract stalemate was a distraction last year. This year, it's been an uncharacteristically quiet offseason for the Cowboys.

At least, that's the public perception.

"I like the idea that the word is that we have had a quiet offseason relative to dare I say off-the-field noise or chatter, whatever you want to call it. I like that," Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said Tuesday, July 28 at the team's opening training camp press conference. "I personally like the fact that the perception is that it's been a quite nonconfrontational offseason. That's good."

A nonconfrontational offseason? Yes.

Quiet? Maybe.

But that shouldn't be confused with inactivity.

The Cowboys used plenty of resources in an attempt to strengthen the NFL's worst scoring defense. Dallas hired first-time defensive coordinator Christian Parker, signed free agents such as safety Jalen Thompson and cornerback Cobie Durant, acquired linebacker Dee Winters and edge rusher Rashan Gary via trades and drafted rookies they expect to make immediate impacts in safety Caleb Downs and edge rusher Malachi Lawrence in the first round of the 2026 NFL Draft.

Cowboys coach Brian Schottenheimer, left, executive vice president Stephen Jones, center, and owner Jerry Jones liked the offseason. KIRBY LEE/IMAGN IMAGES

So maybe quiet isn't the right term to describe the Cowboys this offseason.

"The personnel moves that we made, and bringing in Rashan Gary and Dee Winters and Caleb Downs and Malachi Lawrence. All those moves that we made, it was not a quiet offseason for us. It was a great offseason for us," Cowboys coach Brian Schottenheimer said. "One that we worked extremely hard on."

Schottenheimer later called the Cowboys offseason "awesome."

Dallas returns almost every starter from the NFL's No. 2 offense in 2025. The moves they made, particularly on defense, this offseason were a spirited effort to improve what was one of the worst defenses in franchise history.

No matter which terms the Cowboys use to characterize their offseason, Prescott seems to be on board. The starting quarterback showed up to training camp sporting a Super Bowl 30 T-shirt. A not-so-subtle nod to the Cowboys' last Super Bowl victory 30 years ago (Jan. 28, 1996).

"I like the idea that thinking that positive about what we're going to work for. We've got a long way to go," Jones said of Prescott's Super Bowl 30 T-shirt. "That's good to me to be positive, especially coming from him. He's a big part. He's got a first-hand feel. I like him to be thinking that success level."

In typical Jones fashion, he later used a unique analogy to portray the state of the Cowboys as they kick off camp.

"We're going to burn some of these wagons on the way to California for firewood. We're going to lose some folks. We're going to have some barn, but the wagon train is going to get there. Bottom line is, I love the excitement."

Jones, Schottenheimer and Prescott are feeling optimistic about the Cowboys. Nobody knows where the wagon train is going to wind up. But the drama-free offseason is a sign the Cowboys are at least attempting to handle their business on the field rather than create headlines off it.

Follow USA TODAY Sports' Tyler Dragon on X @TheTylerDragon

NIL payments hit $300M; women biggest winners

John Brice
USA TODAY

Female student-athlete participation in deals involving the use of their name, image and likeness grew by more than 120% in the most recent fiscal year and student-athletes were included in more than $300 million worth of multimedia rights partnership revenue, Learfield announced July 28, according to a report viewed by USA TODAY Sports.

By volume, the amount of NIL deals with Learfield for women jumped from 2,136 in fiscal year 2025 to 4,772 "NIL activities" for FY 2026; the 2,636-deal uptick was part of a broader increase of more than 5,000 NCAA student-athletes, the Learfield Impact report noted.

The company, which recently has used some of its larger partnership properties like Ohio State University and the University of Tennessee as part of "local deal days" to showcase how the company activates NIL deals, also boasted more than 1,700 multimedia revenue deals – again, nearly double Learfield's previous-year tally of 900-plus.

The company did not disclose what portion of the more than $300 million in multimedia partnership revenue was devoted to college football, as well as men's and women's basketball.

But it did reveal that the top five sponsorship teams, company-wide, were the following: football, men's basketball, women's basketball, baseball and softball.

Per Learfield, the most commonplace NIL activities for student-athletes included serving as a company's brand ambassador, video/photo production shoots, social media amplification, in-person appearances and autograph signings.

Touting partners such as T-Mobile, Marriott, Uber and AT&T, among others, Learfield disclosed it engineered 22 national deal partnerships for student-athletes and 69 colleges and universities represented in those national campaigns.

South Carolina's Tessa Johnson drives to the basket against UConn in the Women's NCAA Tournament semifinals in Phoenix. SARAH STIER/GETTY IMAGES

WEATHER

WEATHER ONLINE
USATODAY.COM

The weather changes. Stay up-to-date, 24/7. USA TODAY Download our free app

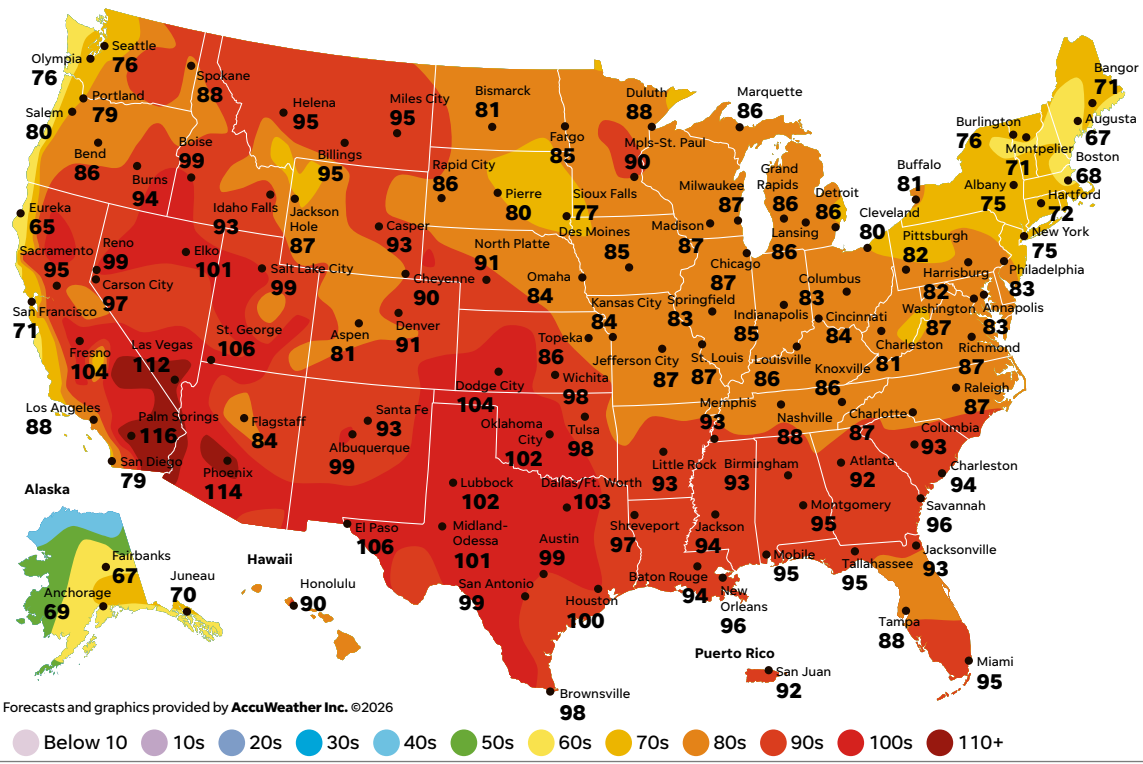
TODAY'S FORECAST

A storm will bring showers from much of the **Northeast** into **New England** today. Flooding will be possible, especially in low-lying and poor-drainage areas in **New England**. The **Southeast** will have afternoon thunderstorms that can bring flooding downpours.

The **Ohio Valley** through the **mid-Atlantic** will be dry and less humid. Afternoon thunderstorms will span from southern **Louisiana** through the **Upper Midwest**. Storms in the **Upper Midwest** can bring hail, flooding downpours and damaging wind gusts. Additional afternoon thunderstorms will dot the **Rockies**.

Hot and dry conditions will occur from western **Texas** through the Desert **Southwest** and parts of the Great Basin, with dry and pleasant conditions expected in the **Pacific Northwest**.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES

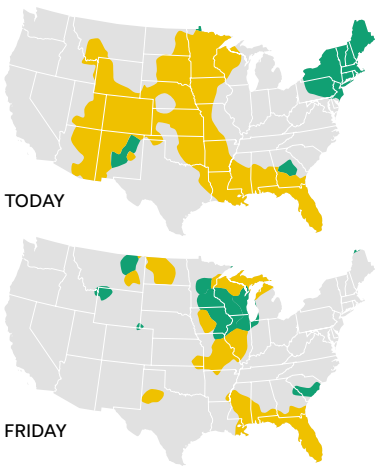


Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather Inc.** ©2026

AccuWeather
Proven **Superior Accuracy**™
Get the AccuWeather app

PRECIPITATION FORECAST

T-storms Rain Snow Ice/mix



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Tuesday

HOTTEST: 118° Death Valley, Calif.

COLDEST: 34° Truckee, Calif.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index **(AQI)**

	THU	FRI	SAT	AQI
ATLANTA	Sunny 92/70	Partly sunny 91/73	T-storms 84/71	Moderate
BALTIMORE	Partly sunny 84/67	Mostly sunny 87/70	Partly sunny 90/70	Good
BOSTON	A few showers 68/64	A stray shower 73/66	Humid 80/69	Good
CHARLOTTE	Sunny 87/66	Sunny 90/71	Partly sunny 89/72	Moderate
CHICAGO	Incr. clouds 87/69	Rain 78/69	T-storms 75/68	Moderate
DALLAS/FT. WORTH	Hot 103/82	Hot 103/83	Hot 101/76	Moderate
DENVER	Stray t-storm 91/62	Stray t-storm 89/62	Stray t-storm 94/67	Moderate
DETROIT	Sunny 86/65	Stray t-storm 88/67	T-storms 79/66	Moderate
HONOLULU	A few showers 90/78	A few showers 89/78	Showers around 88/77	Good
HOUSTON	Very warm 100/79	Very warm 98/80	Very warm 97/79	Moderate
LAS VEGAS	Sunny, hot 112/88	Sunny, hot 112/90	Very hot 117/92	Moderate
LOS ANGELES	Mostly sunny 88/68	Sunny, warm 89/70	Sunny, hot 93/70	Moderate
MIAMI	T-storms 95/79	T-storms 94/79	T-storm 91/80	Good
MPLS-ST. PAUL	Stray t-storm 90/68	Rain 73/64	Warmer 88/67	Moderate
NEW ORLEANS	Heavy t-storm 96/80	Stray t-storm 92/78	A few showers 89/77	Moderate
NEW YORK	A few showers 75/67	Warmer 83/71	Partly sunny 83/70	Good
ORLANDO	T-storms 87/77	Heavy t-storms 87/75	T-storms 90/74	Good
PHILADELPHIA	Shower 83/69	Mostly sunny 88/70	Humid 87/73	Good
PHOENIX	Sunny, hot 114/93	Very hot 116/92	Very hot 117/94	Moderate
SALT LAKE CITY	Very warm 99/75	Very warm 103/76	Hot 106/78	Unhealthy s/g
SAN DIEGO	Some sun 79/68	Humid 79/70	Humid 81/71	Moderate
SAN FRANCISCO	Breezy 71/56	Breezy 72/57	Breezy 73/56	Moderate
SEATTLE	Clouding up 76/56	Sunny 82/59	Not as warm 71/56	Good
WASHINGTON	Mostly sunny 87/71	Mostly sunny 89/73	Clouds, sun 90/72	Good

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Akron, Ohio	80/58s	83/64pc
Albany, N.Y.	75/63sh	83/62pc
Albuquerque	99/74t	99/73t
Allentown, Pa.	80/62pc	83/63s
Amarillo, Texas	104/75pc	97/68s
Anaheim, Calif.	88/66pc	91/69s
Anchorage, Alaska	69/54s	68/54s
Aspen, Colo.	81/52t	85/53t
Atlantic City, N.J.	79/67pc	80/71pc
Augusta, Ga.	93/69s	95/70sh
Austin, Texas	99/76s	102/76pc
Bakersfield, Calif.	103/73s	104/74s
Baton Rouge, La.	94/79t	93/79t
Billings, Mont.	95/68s	98/68s
Birmingham, Ala.	93/70s	93/73c
Bismarck, N.D.	81/61pc	91/64t
Boise, Idaho	99/66h	103/70s
Buffalo, N.Y.	81/62s	81/65c
Burlington, Vt.	76/63sh	82/64c
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	84/68c	72/63r
Charleston, S.C.	94/73pc	94/75sh
Charleston, W.Va.	81/57pc	84/62s
Cheyenne, Wyo.	90/57t	83/58t
Cincinnati	84/66s	85/67c
Cleveland	80/61s	84/68pc
Colorado Springs	90/63t	83/60t
Columbia, S.C.	93/70s	92/73s
Columbus, Ohio	83/63s	86/68pc
Corpus Christi, Texas	96/78s	96/77s
Dayton, Ohio	83/64s	83/67c
Daytona Beach, Fla.	90/76t	89/74t
Des Moines, Iowa	85/70t	81/63t
Duluth, Minn.	88/66t	75/60t
Durham, N.C.	87/64s	88/67s
El Paso, Texas	106/81pc	109/81s
Fairbanks, Alaska	67/49pc	73/50pc
Flagstaff, Ariz.	84/55t	88/57t
Fargo, N.D.	85/66t	87/61t
Fort Myers, Fla.	90/79t	90/77t
Fort Smith, Ark.	93/79t	100/75t
Fort Wayne, Ind.	85/62s	83/65c
Fresno, Calif.	104/70s	106/73s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	86/63s	84/66t
Green Bay, Wis.	89/68t	79/65r
Greensboro, N.C.	85/64s	86/65s
Greenville, S.C.	89/65s	90/69s
Harrisburg, Pa.	82/65pc	89/67pc
Hartford, Conn.	72/64sh	84/63pc
Indianapolis	85/66s	85/68c
Islip, N.Y.	73/65sh	82/67pc
Jackson, Miss.	94/76t	95/76t
Jacksonville, Fla.	93/76t	92/75t
Jefferson City, Mo.	87/74pc	88/70t
Kansas City	84/73t	86/64t
Key West, Fla.	91/83t	91/83t
Knoxville, Tenn.	86/63s	87/67pc
Laredo, Texas	106/80pc	105/81pc
Lexington, Ky.	84/62s	85/70pc
Lincoln, Neb.	84/74t	85/63t
Little Rock, Ark.	93/77t	94/79t
Long Beach, Calif.	84/68pc	88/70s
Louisville, Ky.	86/67s	87/70c
Lubbock, Texas	102/77s	104/75t
Madison, Wis.	87/67pc	73/64r
Manchester, N.H.	70/62sh	81/61pc
Memphis, Tenn.	93/75pc	89/77t
Milwaukee	87/70pc	78/67r
Mobile, Ala.	95/76t	91/77t
Modesto, Calif.	99/63s	102/64s
Montgomery, Ala.	95/74t	95/73pc
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	90/72pc	89/77s
Nags Head, N.C.	83/71s	81/72s
Nashville, Tenn.	88/65s	90/73pc
Newark, N.J.	77/67sh	87/70pc
New Haven, Conn.	74/67sh	85/66pc
Norfolk, Va.	86/70s	86/70pc
Oakland, Calif.	72/56s	74/56s
Oklahoma City	102/75t	100/71t
Omaha, Neb.	84/73t	81/63t
Palm Springs, Calif.	116/86s	117/89s
Pensacola, Fla.	92/77t	93/77t
Pierre, S.D.	80/65t	88/61pc
Pittsburgh	82/58s	84/64pc
Portland, Maine	70/61sh	77/61pc
Portland, Ore.	79/58pc	87/61s
Providence, R.I.	68/63sh	80/65pc
Raleigh, N.C.	87/66s	91/70pc
Rapid City, S.D.	86/62pc	91/64pc
Reno, Nev.	99/62s	102/64s
Richmond, Va.	87/67s	88/69s
Rochester, N.Y.	79/60pc	82/63pc
Sacramento, Calif.	95/59s	100/59s
San Antonio	99/77s	100/79pc
San Jose, Calif.	81/58s	86/58s
Santa Fe, N.M.	93/65t	93/64t
Sarasota, Fla.	89/80t	89/79t
Savannah, Ga.	96/76pc	91/77s
Scottsdale, Ariz.	112/89s	114/89s
Shreveport, La.	97/80t	100/79t
Sioux Falls, S.D.	77/68t	82/62t
South Bend, Ind.	83/63s	82/67t
Spokane, Wash.	88/58s	93/63s
Springfield, Mo.	87/73t	93/66t
Springfield, Ill.	83/65pc	77/67t
St. Louis	87/71pc	84/70t
St. Petersburg, Fla.	86/79t	89/79t
Syracuse, N.Y.	78/63sh	85/62pc
Tallahassee, Fla.	95/75t	94/76t
Tampa, Fla.	88/80t	88/80t
Toledo, Ohio	87/62s	87/66c
Topeka, Kan.	86/74t	89/65t
Tucson, Ariz.	108/84t	110/85s
Tupelo, Miss.	92/70pc	90/75t
Tulsa, Okla.	98/80t	102/72t
Virginia Beach, Va.	84/71s	81/70s
Wichita, Kan.	98/76t	97/69s
Wilmington, Del.	82/66pc	85/68s
Winston-Salem, N.C.	85/64s	87/68s
Worcester, Mass.	66/61sh	77/63pc

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Beijing	93/79sh	95/80pc
Buenos Aires	62/58pc	68/60r
Cancun, Mexico	92/78t	94/77t
Dubai, UAE	114/95s	115/94s
Frankfurt	101/65s	87/66t
Hong Kong	85/79t	86/79t
Istanbul	84/71w	84/72w
Jerusalem	91/72s	92/73s
Johannesburg	68/38h	64/37h
London	82/58pc	80/56s
Mexico City	77/58sh	78/57r
Montreal	78/63sh	82/66sh
Moscow	71/58t	76/57s
Mumbai, India	85/79r	83/80r
Paris	89/65sh	88/63pc
Rio de Janeiro	78/69pc	75/65sh
Rome	95/72s	95/71s
Seoul	90/77pc	92/78pc
Singapore	89/80sh	90/80t
Sydney	62/44s	63/48h
Toronto	82/61s	82/67c
Tokyo	93/81t	94/80sh

NBA

Each team can cite a best offseason move

Mark Giannotto
USA TODAY

The NBA's offseason has reached its next phase. LeBron James made the biggest free agency decision of the year, and now most of the league's major roster questions for the 2026-27 season have been addressed. There could be a few more trades to avoid the NBA's salary-cap penalties, but otherwise the league's major transactions are complete. The best move made by each of the NBA's 30 teams this offseason:

Giannis Antetokounmpo is the newest member of the Heat, with team President Pat Riley, left, and head coach Erik Spoelstra. SAM NAVARRO/IMAGN IMAGES

Atlanta Hawks

• **Kept CJ McCollum**: The Hawks re-signed a key playoff contributor to a one-year, $21 million deal that doesn't compromise the team's future salary cap space if it wants to chase another star to pair with Jalen Johnson.

Boston Celtics

• **Shored up center spot**: Though this Celtics offseason will be defined by the controversial Jaylen Brown trade, the front office also addressed a need by re-signing center Neemias Queta and adding Knicks center Mitchell Robinson for a combined annual salary of less than $30 million. It should give Boston additional size, rebounding and rim protection at good value.

Brooklyn Nets

• **DayRon Sharpe's deal**: The Nets declined Sharpe's team option to sign him to a modest two-year, $10 million contract after the 24-year-old center enjoyed a career year in a reserve role. If Sharpe becomes a full-time starter, this deal would be a bargain.

Charlotte Hornets

• **Retained Coby White after LaMelo Ball trade**: The Hornets signed White to a three-year, $74 million extension immediately following their trade of Ball. White can still push the pace and get downhill, but he also offers a potentially steadier option at point guard.

Chicago Bulls

• **Landed Norman Powell**: Drafting Caleb Wilson may turn out to be the most memorable move the Bulls made in 2026, but he was the obvious pick at No. 4 and they had to beat out the Detroit Pistons and others to sign Powell. The 2026 NBA All-Star fills a hole at shooting guard and his two-year, $45 million contract doesn't lock Chicago into a long-term relationship.

Cleveland Cavaliers

• **Drafted Meleek Thomas**: The Cavaliers signed Donovan Mitchell to a supermax extension that raised some eyebrows and then missed out on LeBron James. But their decision to draft Arkansas guard Meleek Thomas with the No. 34 pick after he slid from his late first-round projection could turn into a steal. Cleveland signed Thomas to a four-year, $9.3 million guaranteed contract and he strengthened the team's confidence by leading the NBA Summer League in scoring (27.3 points per game).

Dallas Mavericks

• **Traded for Zaccharie Risacher**: The Mavericks made several moves to better position themselves around Cooper Flagg as the franchise cornerstone, but acquiring the 2024 No. 1 overall pick and only giving up an undrafted player from a year ago (Ryan Nembhard) is the kind of gamble that can accelerate a rebuild if it pays off. Risacher, 21, has ideal length and athleticism for a 3-and-D wing if he can figure out how his game translates at the NBA level.

Denver Nuggets

• **Matched offer sheet for Spencer Jones**: The Nuggets put themselves in the second apron by matching the two-year, $12 million offer sheet Jones got from the Oklahoma City Thunder. The decision complicated Denver's negotiations with restricted free agent Peyton Watson and could force a salary-clearing trade. But losing a young two-way wing to a conference rival for nothing would have been difficult to justify.

Detroit Pistons

• **Traded for Isaiah Joe**: There is a lot of attention on the Pistons' front office due to the ongoing negotiations with restricted free agent Jalen Duren and concerns about Cade Cunningham's supporting cast. But Detroit desperately needed more shooting, and Joe came at the relatively low price of two future second-round picks. His $11.3 million salary this season, with a team option for 2027-28, makes this a low-risk bet with significant upside since Joe was a proven floor spacer.

Golden State Warriors

• **Kristaps Porzingis' team-friendly extension**: The Warriors haven't pulled off a major move, but they did extend Kristaps Porzingis with a creative, team-friendly contract structure. Though the deal was announced as a two-year, $40 million contract, only $3 million of Porzingis' salary for the 2027-28 season is guaranteed. It provides Golden State with protection given his injury history, but his multifaceted offensive skill set could thrive with a full season in coach Steve Kerr's system.

Houston Rockets

• **Tari Eason's deal**: The Rockets didn't react to last season's disappointing first-round exit from the NBA playoffs with another batch of splashy moves, but the front office was lauded for the value it got on the five-year, $81 million extension signed by forward Tari Eason. The 25-year-old reportedly turned down a $100 million contract offer a year ago and had an uneven 2025-26 season, particularly shooting from 3-point range. But he remains a coveted two-way wing for his contributions beyond scoring.

Indiana Pacers

• **Signed Kelly Oubre Jr.**: The Pacers added a veteran two-way wing without using much salary space by signing Oubre to a two-year, $16.5 million contract. The 30-year-old is coming off the most efficient season of his career and his defensive versatility has long been a strength. If he becomes a regular part of Indiana's playoff rotation, the deal could prove to be one of the better values from this offseason.

LA Clippers

• **Traded Kawhi Leonard (maybe)**: The Clippers appeared to successfully move on from the failed experiment of pairing James Harden with Kawhi Leonard when they got a better-than-expected return in a trade for Leonard. The Raptors were set to give up Brandon Ingram, Gradey Dick, two first-round picks, two second-round picks and two pick swaps in the deal. But the trade is now on hold while the NBA completes its investigation into Leonard and the Clippers.

Los Angeles Lakers

• **Acquired Walker Kessler**: The Lakers entered the offseason seeking a long-term upgrade at center for Luka Doncic, and they paid a hefty price to acquire one. Whether GM Rob Pelinka gave up too much for a relatively unproven player is up for debate, but the four-year, $130 million contract Kessler got in Los Angeles makes him part of the team's nucleus for the foreseeable future. When healthy, he's a strong fit because of his impact in the pick-and-roll and as a rim protector.

Memphis Grizzlies

• **Drafted Cameron Boozer**: The Grizzlies completed their roster teardown by trading Ja Morant and Santi Aldama this offseason, but their most important addition came during the draft. Landing a potential franchise cornerstone with the No. 3 pick was a critical part of the team's rebuilding efforts, and Boozer's skill sets should complement center Zach Edey and 2025 first-round pick Cedric Coward.

Miami Heat

• **Traded for Giannis Antetokounmpo**: Pat Riley and the Heat finally got another superstar to come to South Beach. Miami gave up a lot of its core to get Antetokounmpo from the Bucks, leaving limited support outside of Bam Adebayo and Andrew Wiggins. But the chance to acquire a player of Antetokounmpo's caliber rarely comes and beating out the rest of the league for him was still a landmark accomplishment for the franchise. The Heat are a legitimate contender again because of Antetokounmpo.

Milwaukee Bucks

• **The Giannis trade haul**: The Bucks are in rebuilding mode for the first time in years and the trade package they got in return for Antetokounmpo got them a strong foundation with which to work. Milwaukee landed Tyler Herro, three young rotation players and three first-round draft picks for a mix of immediate contributors and future assets that will also be valuable for the Bucks as potential trade chips.

Minnesota Timberwolves

• **Took a big swing on LaMelo Ball**: The Timberwolves gave up Julius Randle, Naz Reid and much of their future draft capital to pair Ball with Anthony Edwards. That's a steep price considering Ball's durability issues in the past. Their bet will need to produce more than highlight reels and funny postgame moments, but at least the franchise is willing to make one to raise its ceiling. Ball and Edwards have the potential to be the NBA's most dynamic backcourts for years.

New Orleans Pelicans

• **Re-signed DeAndre Jordan**: This is the Pelicans' best move because it's the only move they've made other than drafting Jason Pierre Jr. in the second round. Jordan is more a coach than player at this point in his career, but he's a valued locker room presence.

New York Knicks

• **Kept Jose Alvarado**: The Knicks mostly sat out the offseason in order to avoid the second apron of the NBA's salary cap, but they appeared to secure a hometown discount when Alvarado declined a $4.5 million player option and signed a three-year, $14 million deal to remain as New York's backup point guard. The Brooklyn native arrived at the trade deadline last season and his presence as a proven pest off the bench should help keep Jalen Brunson fresh, particularly during the regular season.

Oklahoma City Thunder

• **Isaiah Hartenstein's team-friendly contract**: The Thunder spent much of this offseason shedding contracts to stay under the second apron of the NBA's salary cap. But the three-year, $75 million extension Hartenstein agreed to before free agency began looks team-friendly given what other top-end centers have received recently.

Orlando Magic

• **Reunited with Nikola Vucevic**: The Magic are banking on the moves they made a year ago working out with a little more injury luck during the 2026-27 season. But Orlando did bring back Vucevic on a veteran-minimum contract. The 35-year-old center began his NBA career with the Magic and could provide scoring help and experience off the bench at a low cost.

Philadelphia 76ers

• **Won the LeBron James sweepstakes**: There's an argument to be made that James never even considers joining the 76ers without the blockbuster trade that sent Jaylen Brown from the Celtics to Philadelphia. But new president of basketball operations Mike Gansey might never top acquiring the NBA's all-time leading scorer when he's still one of the league's top performers, especially on a veteran-minimum contract. James completes arguably the league's most potent starting lineup after a strong playoff run this past season.

Phoenix Suns

• **Re-signed Collin Gillespie**: The Suns made another splash by trading for Miles Bridges, but retaining guard Collin Gillespie on a four-year, $48 million deal before he hit the market should be a valuable contract for Phoenix. Gillespie began with the Suns on a two-way contract before setting the franchise record for 3-pointers with 232 last season.

Portland Trail Blazers

• **Traded for Ja Morant**: Though Morant might be an odd fit given the Blazers' glut of guards, Portland gave up very little for a two-year look at a player considered one of the NBA's rising stars not long ago. Morant should be motivated to prove himself after several injury-marred seasons in Memphis.

Sacramento Kings

• **Waived DeMar DeRozan**: The Kings are mostly stuck with an expensive roster that can't compete in the Western Conference for now, but they were able to free some salary cap space by waiving DeRozan's partially guaranteed contract. The franchise has until the end of August to decide whether to stretch DeRozan's $10 million cap hit over three seasons. It's not a flashy move, but a necessary one for the franchise to begin extricating itself from its salary cap predicament.

San Antonio Spurs

• **Victor Wembanyama's extension**: The Spurs made savvy moves by signing Tobias Harris and retaining Julian Champagnie, but persuading Wembanyama to sign a 25% max extension this year instead of waiting for an even bigger payday next year will benefit the franchise's salary cap situation for years to come. The deal could wind up saving the Spurs more than $50 million and sets the tone that their star is willing to sacrifice financially in pursuit of a championship.

Toronto Raptors

• **Traded for Kawhi Leonard again (maybe)**: The Raptors secured the experienced crunch-time scorer they were missing during the playoffs without giving up any of their young emerging stars. But the trade for Leonard remains on hold since he and the Clippers are still involved in an NBA investigation related to salary cap circumvention allegations. If the trade is approved, Leonard immediately vaults the Raptors into the Eastern title conversation.

Utah Jazz

• **Traded Walker Kessler**: Losing Kessler may hurt Utah in the short term, though perhaps not as much as expected after the additions of Jusuf Nurkic and Mo Bamba. But acquiring two first-round picks, two pick swaps and future salary-cap flexibility by moving Kessler gives the Jazz an intriguing collection of young players and draft assets. The trade should position Utah to pursue another major move down the road.

Washington Wizards

• **Drafted A.J. Dybantsa**: As the Wizards' rebuild moves into its next phase with the infusion of veterans Trae Young and Anthony Davis, the addition of Dybantsa as the No. 1 pick remains Washington's most important offseason move. The franchise's path to becoming a consistent contender in the Eastern Conference will go hand-in-hand with Dybantsa's development, and he's the favorite to lead all rookies in scoring despite having plenty of room to grow.

LAST CHANCE TO SAVE

THE NEW YORK KNICKS' CHAMPIONSHIP IN A HARDCOVER COLLECTOR'S BOOK

10% OFF

$35.95

REG. $39.95

+ tax & shipping
offer expires Aug. 23, 2026
books ship Aug. 28, 2026

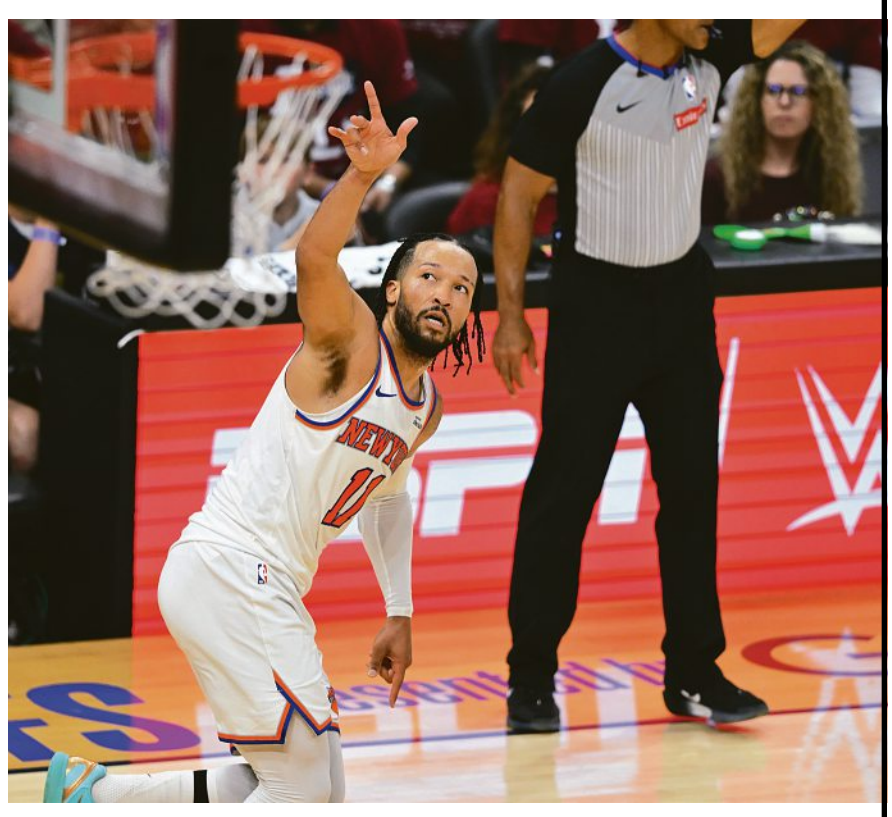
The Knicks are champions! New York hadn't won an NBA title since 1973. Fifty-three years of heartbreak — from Ewing's near-miss in '94 to the '99 Finals run that fell short — tested every fan who ever packed Madison Square Garden. *That wait is over!*

Jalen Brunson and company ripped through the 2026 playoffs, reaching the NBA Finals with 11 consecutive victories that closed out the Hawks, included sweeps of the 76ers and Cavaliers. Then the Knicks polished off Victor Wembanyama and San Antonio in five games to hoist the Larry O'Brien Trophy.

"Garden Glory" is a 160-page hardcover book covering this entire season, from a 53-win regular season through the Finals showdown with San Antonio. The photos, the stories, the moments that made it real. Published by USA TODAY Sports. Printed on premium matte stock. Reserve your copy today.

PREORDER ONLINE AND SAVE AT

NY.ChampsBook.com



USA TODAY SPORTS

‘The Odyssey’ finds its way home on our books list

Thanks to the hit movie, Homer’s classic lands at No. 2, while “The Iliad” is No. 39. **Page 2D**

‘Shark Lady’ sets a record for tattoos on Shark Week

Emily Morrison has 108 shark tattoos, along with Guinness World Record recognition. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE

LIA TOBY/GETTY IMAGES

THEY SAID WHAT?
THE STARS’ BEST QUOTES

“We like bird watching. We’ve got binoculars. We’ve got long lenses, and we watch ‘Birds of Prey’ a lot. I do the gardening. He sits under a tree and plays his guitar, and we couldn’t be happier,” Elizabeth Hurley said of her partner of a year and a half, Billy Ray Cyrus. The actress, during a recent interview on SiriusXM’s “Andy Cohen Live,” said the couple have met each other’s families, with Hurley calling Cyrus’ popstar daughter Miley Cyrus “adorable.”

IT’S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO’S CELEBRATING TODAY

Nolan

Singer **Paul Anka** turns 85. Actor-politician **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, 79. Actor **Jean Reno**, 78. Singer-songwriter **Kate Bush**, 68. Director **Richard Linklater**, 66. Actor **Laurence Fishburne**, 65. TV personality **Alton Brown**, 64. Actor **Lisa Kudrow**, 63. Actor **Vivica A. Fox**, 62. Actor **Terry Crews**, 58. Actor **Simon Baker**, 57. Director **Christopher Nolan**, 56. Comedian **Tom Green**, 55. Drummer **Brad Hargreaves** (Third Eye Blind), 55. Actor **Christine Taylor**, 55. Actor **Hilary Swank,** 52. Actor **Jaime Pressly**, 49. Actor **Martin Starr**, 44. Actor **Yvonne Strahovski**, 44. Actor **Gina Rodriguez**, 42. Actor **Joey King**, 27. *– USA TODAY Network*

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). Network, network, network! The Aquarius moon harmonizes with Mars today, bringing you the support that you need. Ask for it.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You know what you need to do. Prioritize your ambitions.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Take the initiative on something that excites you today. Fresh ideas come to life when you pair them with action.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Today is full of energy, but it may all be in your head! Is your confidence brewing in the background?

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Do relationships feel energized? Ride the momentum. Work together toward your dreams.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Get to work! Productivity comes with ease when the Aquarius moon harmonizes with Mars. Focus on making tangible progress.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Inspiration and confidence align today! Take your creative ideas higher.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Transformational ideas can feel very stimulating today. Do you feel ready to shift at a foundational level?

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Conversations can move relationships forward today. Lead the charge. What do you have to get off your chest?

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Feeling confident in your abilities? Now that you know what you want, you can put your talents to use.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Expressing yourself without second-guessing? Creative confidence meets clarity of vision.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). A clear space makes for a clear head. Does your living environment need your active attention? Freshen up your surroundings.

TELEVISION

Jimmy Fallon has been behind the desk at “The Tonight Show” since 2014.
PROVIDED BY TODD OWYOUNG/NBC

Fallon’s ideas light the torch in late night

Wendy Naugle USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Jimmy Fallon can’t sit still. Part of the problem is that he has spilled salad dressing on his khaki pants. More than a few drops – a hand-sized explosion. ● At 51, he knows he needs to be healthy, hence the salad. “Not full-on lettuce,” he says, joking about the cyclospora outbreak linked to explosive diarrhea. “That’s extreme weight loss.”

His lunch, he clarifies, was Pura Vida salmon with avocado. Sleek silver weights taunt him from the floor of his corner office at 30 Rock. They’re a counterbalance to the Levain cookies and bowl of Bjorn Corn popcorn on his table, where his “Tonight Show” writers meet regularly.

He and his team have been busy: “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” is coming off a major week with the World Cup and most of the stars of “The Odyssey” coming by.

The double whammy led to viral hits – including a retelling of “The Odyssey” in 60 seconds and Holland vs. Halaand, in which Fallon compares the “Spider-Man” star to the Norwegian footballer – and a ratings boost that pushed the show into the top slot among adults 18 to 49, the young demographic coveted by advertisers.

Some 51-year-olds would be content to just keep doing what he’s doing. But not Fallon. On Monday, July 27, he launched the show’s first microdrama, one of those ultra-short, fast-paced video series with one- to two-minute episodes shot vertically for smartphones.

“It seems to be kind of the trend. So we wanted to spoof it as soon as we could,” he says.

It took several weeks to develop, write and secure the cast, which includes Fallon, John Stamos and Delaney Rowe, but they filmed it in one day on the show’s usual day off.

“I don’t even know if it’s funny,” he says as he previews the first two episodes for USA TODAY.

Fallon, if he is capable, can relax: It’s funny.

And yet again, he’s showing he’s not afraid to get out from behind the desk and try something new. Even as he deals with a condiment catastrophe.

Fallon never planned on reinventing late-night

Late-night TV has had a tough year.

There was the cancellation of “The Late Show With Stephen Colbert” on CBS. Jimmy Kimmel was

See FALLON, Page 2D

“The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon” premiered its first microdrama, “Who Billionaire? Me Billionaire” on July 27. The vertical stars from left, Kasey Esser, Delaney Rowe, John Stamos, Rose Kelso and Fallon. PROVIDED BY TODD OWYOUNG/NBC

STREAMING

Rossum takes ‘Furious’ shot with muscle, not BB guns

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY

“Shameless” star Emmy Rossum went all-in playing an NYPD cop-turned-FBI agent in “Furious,” but she drew the line when it came to getting shot – even if it was during a training exercise with BB guns.

On day two of the training session for the eight-episode drama series (first three episodes streaming on Hulu and Disney+), Rossum, 39, who had already had weapons training, was given a powerful BB gun and told to seize a hilltop position during a rainstorm.

“I try not to do cardio; it’s not my thing. But I’m in the driving rain trying to take this hill,” Rossum tells USA TODAY. “Halfway up, I see someone in a poncho with a gun of their own who was shooting back at me. I was like: ‘No, no, no. We’re good with this one. This person is shooting at me. I did not sign up for this.’ ”

Rossum says she took a BB hit to the “center mass” torso area. And though she was wearing protective tactical gear, she had to call it.

“Furious” follows FBI agent Alice Black (Emmy Rossum) on the hunt for a mysterious and calculating female serial killer.
PROVIDED BY SARAH SHATZ/DISNEY

“There was stuff whizzing by my head, and I’d been shot,” she says. “It was getting a little too real.”

Even with the abbreviated training exercise, executive producer Rossum brings quiet authenticity to Alice Black, the determined FBI agent who partners with her former NYPD colleague Danny Kelly (Scoot McNairy) to hunt Catherine (Lola Petticrew), a serial killer targeting powerful men tied to a child trafficking ring.

Rossum credits constant beef snacks for 10 pounds of muscle

When creating “Furious,” writer and executive producer Elizabeth Meriwether (“New Girl,” “Dying for Sex”) was inspired by the 1987 thriller “Black Widow.” In the film, Debra Winger plays FBI agent Alex Barnes, who tracks down the gold-digging serial killer Catharine Peterson (Theresa Russell) as she moves from husband to husband, killing them to collect their fortunes.

Though the main characters’ names are similar, the motivations and story of the two “Furious” characters are more complicated and dark.

“I was so into the idea of doing a character study of these two women, really digging into the psychology of a female serial killer and female FBI agent,” Meriwether says. “The fun of the show is that in chasing this serial killer, Emmy’s character is forced to deal with things inside her that she hasn’t looked at or thought about in a long time.”

In a summer dominated by Greek mythology thanks to Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey,” “Furious” has unexpected but powerful connections.

“We had a tricky time coming up with the title and eventually gave the

See ROSSUM, Page 4D

How to watch ‘Furious’

The first three episodes of “Furious” are streaming now on Hulu and Disney+. New episodes arrive every Monday through Aug. 31.

USA TODAY BEST-SELLING BOOKS BOOKLIST.USATODAY.COM

☐ Rank this week ☐ Rank last week

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
1	1	**Theo of Golden**/Levi, Allen	Atria Books	Literary	F
2	14	**The Odyssey**/Homer	W. W. Norton & Company	Classics	F
3	4	**Dungeon Crawler Carl**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
4	17	**The Calamity Club**/Stockett, Kathryn	Spiegel & Grau	Literary	F
5	3	**Yesteryear**/Burke, Caro Claire	Knopf Publishing Group	Feminist	F
6	8	**Whistler**/Patchett, Ann	Harper	Literary	F
7	n/a	**Prince of Swords**/Kova, Elise	Del Rey Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
8	10	**Project Hail Mary**/Weir, Andy	Ballantine Books	Thrillers - Suspense	F
9	n/a	**Cool Machine**/Whitehead, Colson	Doubleday Books	Literary	F
10	2	**Regime Change: Inside the Imperial Presidency of Donald Trump**/Haberman, M. and Swan, J.	Simon & Schuster	American Government	NF
11	15	**The Country Road Murders: A Thriller**/Patterson, James	Little Brown and Company	Thrillers - Suspense	F
12	n/a	**A Forsaken Prophecy**/McEwan, Stacey	S&s/Saga Press	Romance - New Adult	F
13	20	**Lights Out: An Into Darkness Novel**/Allen, Navessa	Zando - Slowburn	Romance - New Adult	F
14	142	**The Price of Becoming: The Compounding Practices of High Performance**/Hawk, Ryan	Harper Edge	Social Psychology	NF
15	24	**Courage Can Save Us: Ten Extraordinary Americans and the Fight for Our Future**/Barcott, Rye	Bloomsbury Publishing	Leadership	NF
16	19	**The Divorce**/McFadden, Freida	Poisoned Pen Press	Women	F
17	23	**Haunting Adeline**/Carlton, H D	Zando	Romance - Contemporary	F
18	n/a	**Stolen by Shadows (Deluxe Edition)**/Helen, Elizabeth	Bloom Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
19	28	**The Housemaid's Wedding**/McFadden, Freida	Poisoned Pen Press	Women	F
20	26	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**/Carle, Eric	Philomel Books	Classics	F
21	n/a	**My Friends**/Backman, Fredrik	Atria Books	Humorous - General	F
22	n/a	**Gachiakuta 11**/Urana, Kei	Kodansha Comics	Manga - General	NF
23	n/a	**Lorenzo: A Grumpy/Sunshine Dark Mafia Romance Novel (Original)**/Kincaid, Sadie	Mira Books	Romance - Contemporary	F
24	n/a	**This Is the Plan: How to End America's Meltdown and Save Democracy**/Wikler, Ben	W. W. Norton & Company	Political Process - Political Parties	NF
25	18	**Love You More**/Giffin, Emily	Ballantine Books	Literary	F
26	31	**Carl's Doomsday Scenario**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
27	27	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?: 50th Anniversary Edition (Anniversary)**/Martin, Bill	Henry Holt & Company	Classics	F
28	7	**The Risk Worth Taking: A Story of Breaking Free and Trading for a Life You Love**/Ijeoma, Teri	Frederick Douglass Books	Personal Success	NF
29	35	**The Correspondent**/Evans, Virginia	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	Women	F
30	n/a	**Under the Oak Tree: Volume 3 (the Comic)**/Kim, Suji	Inklore	Fantasy	NF
31	37	**The Dungeon Anarchist's Cookbook**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
32	32	**Warriors Graphic Novel: The New Prophecy, Part One of Three**/Hunter, Erin	Harperalley	Action & Adventure - General	F
33	21	**Heartstopper #6: A Graphic Novel**/Oseman, Alice	Graphix	Comics & Graphic Novels - Romance	F
34	6	**Ransom**/Silva, Daniel	Harper	Thrillers - Suspense	F
35	34	**The Deal**/Kennedy, Elle	Bloom Books	Coming of Age	F
36	36	**Land**/O'Farrell, Maggie	Knopf Publishing Group	Literary	F
37	48	**Red Rising**/Brown, Pierce	Del Rey Books	Action & Adventure	F
38	45	**The Emperor of Gladness**/Vuong, Ocean	Penguin Books	Literary	F
39	n/a	**Iliad**/Homer	W. W. Norton & Company		NF
40	66	**Country People**/Mason, Daniel	Random House	Literary	F
41	40	**The Buffalo Hunter Hunter**/Jones, Stephen Graham	S&s/Saga Press	Horror - General	F
42	43	**The Gate of the Feral Gods**/Dinniman, Matt	Ace Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
43	46	**Murdoku: 80 Murder Mystery Logic Puzzles**/Garand, Manuel	Puzzlewright Press	Logic & Brain Teasers	NF
44	n/a	**Unlearning Silence: How to Speak Your Mind, Unleash Talent, and Live More Fully**/Lin Hering, Elaine	Penguin Life	Interpersonal Relations	NF
45	16	**In Stormy Weather**/Curto, Chelsea	Atria Books	Romance - Small Town & Rural	F
46	n/a	**The Story Keeper: A New Novel from the Author of the Things We Cannot Say (Original)**/Rimmer, Kelly	Mira Books	Literary	F
47	n/a	**Yes, Chef: A Romance Novel**/Reilly, Grace	Avon Books	Women	F
48	42	**Atmosphere: A GMA Book Club Pick: A Love Story**/Reid, Taylor Jenkins	Ballantine Books	Literary	F
49	58	**Murdle: Volume 1: 100 Elementary to Impossible Mysteries to Solve Using Logic, Skill, and the Power of Deduction**/Karber, G. T.	St. Martin's Griffin	Logic & Brain Teasers	NF
50	50	**The Let Them Theory: A Life-Changing Tool That Millions of People Can't Stop Talking About**/Robbins, Mel	Hay House LLC	Personal Success	NF

WHAT AMERICA'S READING® The book list appears every Thursday. You also can find it at booklist.usatoday.com. Each week, USA TODAY collects sales data from booksellers representing a variety of outlets: bookstore chains, independent bookstores, mass merchandisers and online retailers. Using that data, we determine the 150 top-selling titles of the week.

Fallon

Continued from Page 1D

forced into a brief hiatus for comments he made about Charlie Kirk's assassination, and ABC still faces threats from the Federal Communications Commission.

With Colbert's departure, Fallon feels some responsibility to carry late-night into the next generation. "The idea of it is that it's just someone that you can talk to that's there for you, that you can laugh, and you can know what's going on in pop culture in the world," Fallon says. "I think that's just needed."

But even before 2026, the once-coveted time slot on the major networks at 11:35 p.m. had its challenges. Much like most of linear TV, viewership has fallen by roughly 50%, and revenue has followed.

When Fallon took the helm in 2014, he of course knew the DNA of "The Tonight Show."

"I remember coming out the first night, and I wanted to explain to everybody who hadn't seen 'The Tonight Show' what it is," he says. "These are The Roots; they're the greatest band on Earth. That's [Steve] Higgins; he's our announcer. We'll banter back and forth. I read some jokes based on what's going on in the news. And then I go sit over there and interview celebrities, and then we'll have a musical guest."

But the trick was that Fallon did not follow the script of the typical late-night show. Right out of the gate, he relied less on interviews than his predecessors or his peers, with 37% of his show devoted to "talk" compared with 51% for Jay Leno, Johnny Carson, Seth Meyers and David Letterman, and 48% for Jimmy Kimmel. Monologues were roughly the same, with Fallon using 23% of his time on comedy sketches and 14% on music, according to a 2014 study.

It was a recipe for the digital age, when beats make clips travel far and wide on TikTok and sketches are perfect for Shorts on YouTube. The format also relies less on politics than some of his competitors. Though "The Tonight Show" isn't winning the Nielsen ratings, it wins on YouTube and social: It has more than 100 million followers and subscribers, and it's the third-highest TV show for engagement (the metric that measures active participation, such as liking or sharing content rather than auto views), behind ESPN's "SportsCenter" and Netflix's "Stranger Things," according to NBC.

Fallon says the social-first nature of his show wasn't planned. "I wanted to build that audience along with the show, and it's helped," he says. "We just keep our heads down and keep doing comedy and whatever we can do to make people laugh."

Once the "SNL" newbie, now he's an elder statesman in the building. "It's a grind after you do this for so many years. [You think], what can inspire people? And you go, 'Dude, this is so weird. Let's go.' "

The microdrama, "Who Billionaire? Me Billionaire," has the feel of an "SNL" daytime soap opera spoof with hilarious cliffhangers at the end of each episode. Viewers will binge through the series in less time than it takes for a Pura Vida delivery – and that's OK, since Fallon has plenty more ideas. He has helped revive the game show "Password" and is producing a new Wordle show, starring Savannah Guthrie, expected to be released next year.

"We were going to tape it earlier," he says, acknowledging the tragedy of Guthrie's mother's disappearance. "[I told Savannah] don't worry about us. We will wait for whenever it's the right time. And so we did."

They recently filmed in the U.K., and she's "crushing it," he says.

He has similar praise for his "Password" costar, Keke Palmer. "Keke can honestly do everything," he says. "Her work ethic is crazy. Her thing is we're both Virgos; that's why we get along because we just love working."

A man of many hats, and many guests

Fallon has jumped up to walk through future guests on the show. There are ideas for Matthew McConaughey, Callum Turner, Zoë Saldana. At night he fills up the voice memo app on his phone when anything pops into his head. He sits back down and cues up a recording of a whisper-y Fallon singing a half-baked holiday ditty about a father trying to get their kids to "put their coats on and get in the (expletive) car." The jingle isn't done yet; he needs a twist at the end – maybe the kids need to pee after they are finally bundled up? – but it's July. He has time.

His love of music, he says, comes from his parents, who listened to doo-wop while he and his sister, Gloria, preferred Michael Jackson. His parents spurred him on early; they'd give him a

Matt Damon shares some "Freezer Secrets" in a skit with Jimmy Fallon on "The Tonight Show" as part of his press tour for "The Odyssey."
PROVIDED BY TODD OWYOUNG/NBC

quarter for doing Rodney Dangerfield impersonations. When his mom heard about a talent contest, she suggested he enter. He won first place for his impressions, and $1,000. His parents let him keep the cash, which he spent on an electric guitar.

At 15, he went to a friend's party and there was a band. "The guy in the band was like: 'I heard there's a kid here, Jimmy, that plays guitar. Do you want to play something?' I was like, 'I would never get onstage.' "

But his friend egged him on. "The guys were probably in their 20s, but to me, they were old men. And I played 'Wipe Out' in front of this whole party. That was my first time on stage going for it. … I had the best night ever. So I think that kind of got me going."

"The Tonight Show" lets it all come together. "I think my wife is so happy for me to have this job because she's like, 'This guy's got a lot of ideas, man,' " he says. "She's the secret sauce to everything. I usually go to her to go, 'What do you think of this?' "

Fallon and Nancy Juvonen, a producer and cofounder of Flower Films with Drew Barrymore, have been married nearly 20 years. They share daughters Winnie, 12, and Frances, 11. Juvonen lets her husband freewheel but also keeps him focused.

"When COVID happened, I went home and my wife was like, 'So what's the plan?' And I go, 'I think we're just off for two weeks.' She's like: 'Huh? You're not going to be off. You have to get out there and you have to do the show from your phone because everyone's going through this right now. They need you. This is why you do what you do.' I was like, 'Oh yeah, this is it.' "

There's another reason he does what he does: He loves showbiz. He wants to do his part to help keep it going.

"I love it. I really do. We just did a bit with John Cena where I was dipped in a thing of whipped cream," he says, and then lists the possible complaints: "It's going to take half an hour to shower it off. You have to shower with Dawn liquid soap to get the whipped cream off, which I didn't know – you learn these things. And I'm like, 'Yeah, but it's show business. We're putting on a fun thing.' "

What's next for 'Tonight Show'?

Fallon struggles to think of a guest he's still chasing, because he has had them all. Bruce Springsteen? Though the Boss protested, Fallon got him to wear a wig and put on his glasses from his Born to Run tour with a flat cap.

"He walked out of the dressing room," Fallon says, "and his manager was across the hall, and they both kind of got emotional." Springsteen looked like his younger self.

Carol Burnett? She slapped Fallon across the face in one sketch. Former President Barack Obama? He slow-jammed the news, twice.

"I wanted to have the queen," Fallon says of Queen Elizabeth II, who died in 2022. "The pope maybe could be fun."

He doesn't always recognize the gravity of his guests in the moment, but it's clear he feels it.

The walls are filled with mementos: a burlap bag signed by Michelle Obama from when they did a potato sack race together. Line art by Grace Coddington of Fallon hosting her on the show. A painting from Paul Newman (proceeds from Fallon's Tonight Dough ice cream benefit SeriousFun Children's Network, which was founded by the actor). A photo from Brian Grazer, who, as a prank, leaves personal photos in places he has been. Artwork by one of Fallon's daughters. A poster that reads: "I love it, what is it?" Framed ticket stubs from his first shows. He can tell a story about each and every piece.

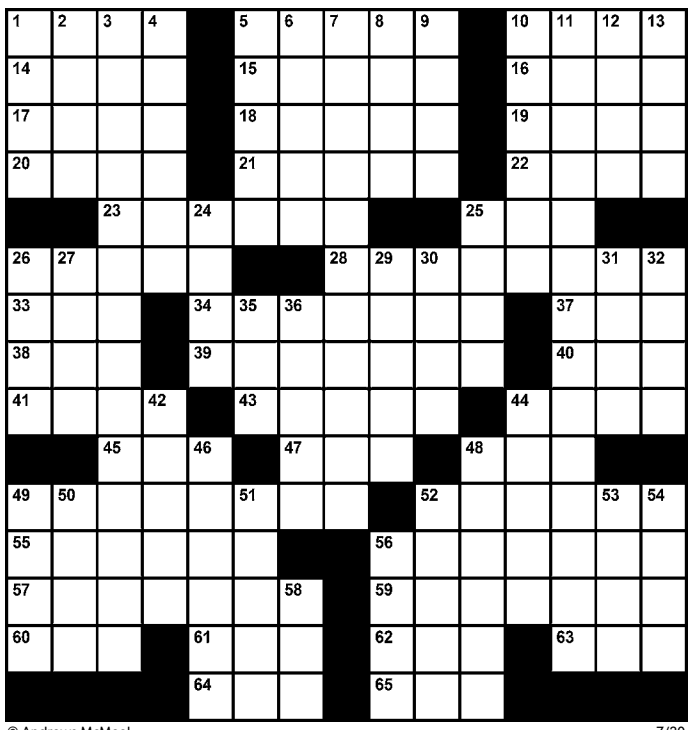
During commercials, people in his studio audience sometimes ask him for advice for being a comedian or actor.

"I'm like, 'Do it because you like it.' Don't do it for the money, because before this – I'm very lucky there's money in it for me now – but there's no money in this. If you do it because you like it, you can do it forever."

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amie Walker
BY Zaineb Akbar

CAPSTONE



© Andrews McMeel 7/30

ACROSS
1 It twinkles in the night sky
5 Fancy neckwear
10 Rounded hairstyle
14 Part of a book
15 Gave out light
16 Gunky buildup
17 Company leader, for short
18 "Frida" actor Hayek
19 Signaled
20 Vast
21 Respected community member
22 Disencumbers
23 "Hold on!"
25 Openly queer
26 Drifts through the air
28 Za'atar and ___ (classic pairing in a dip)
33 Sound heard in a dog park
34 "Sagwa, the Chinese ___ Cat" (cartoon feline with a colorpoint coat)
37 Medication-approving org.
38 Compete
39 Unjust
40 "Waterfalls" girl group
41 "___ the Pearl" (nickname for basketball player Monroe)
43 Highlighter colors
44 Singular or plural pronoun
45 Break a fast
47 Recipient of many returns
48 Forest frolicker
49 Comment made with a wink
52 Central character in Toni Morrison's "Jazz"
55 Itty-bitty mint
56 Make like new
57 Part of a canopy
59 Newsroom figures
60 Surfaces and Zenbooks
61 One-___-million chance
62 Cow's greeting
63 Colorado time zone, for short
64 Tax ID
65 Texting format

DOWN
1 Gush
2 New York ___ Workers Alliance (drivers' union)
3 Features of May-December relationships
4 Not that long ago
5 Obnoxious people
6 Fossil-yielding rock
7 Something that offers little consolation
8 "This one's ___!"
9 Eye drop?
10 Amass over time
11 Underwear brand whose logo is often misremembered as featuring a cornucopia
12 Deeply regretted
13 Likelihood
24 The "A" of PTA (Abbr.)
25 Not obsessed with anymore
26 Shore sight
27 "___ Code" (opera podcast)
29 Tilts
30 Egyptian goddess
31 Doing nothing
32 Like some lingerie
35 Tiny charged particle
36 Didn't dine out
42 Frothy lavender drink, perhaps
44 Fairy's under-the-pillow find
46 "In other words . . ."
48 Nightclubs with mirrored balls
49 Letters before ://
50 "Unless I'm mistaken . . .," in a text
51 Clickable desktop images
52 Viper's secretion
53 Makes a mistake
54 It may require bubbling in answers
56 Male sheep
58 Prefix with "sexual"

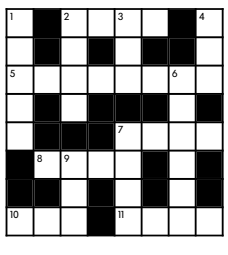
Wednesday's Answer

7/29

CROSSWORDS ON YOUR PHONE
get our crossword app

Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.

TXTPERT



7/30

Across
2. 7825
5. 46257678
7. 8873
8. 9663
10. 727
11. 6338

Down
1. 78429
2. 7529
3. 287
4. 628
6. 787653
7. 8326
9. 627

© USA TODAY and Rich Coulter

Today's theme
Sport

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

7/29

Yesterday's solution

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

7				1		3		
	9	5		3				2
			6	9		5	7	
	1	2			7			
9				2				8
			5			7	2	
	6	1		7	3			
4				5		9	3	
		9		4				7

7/30 DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

© Andrews McMeel

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

		3	2	4	
				3	5
6			4		
		4			2
4	3				
	2	6	3		

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

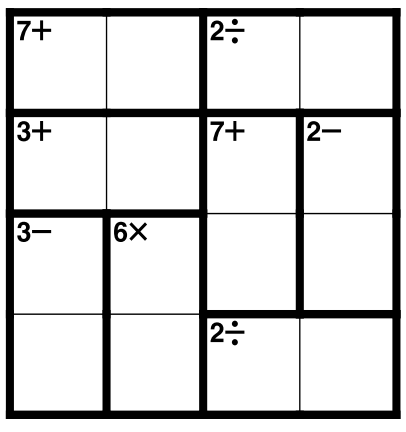
Wednesday's Answers

4	5	7	8	3	9	6	2	1
6	3	8	2	4	1	5	9	7
1	9	2	5	7	6	4	3	8
3	1	5	6	9	7	8	4	2
8	7	6	4	1	2	9	5	3
9	2	4	3	5	8	7	1	6
2	8	3	9	6	4	1	7	5
7	6	9	1	2	5	3	8	4
5	4	1	7	8	3	2	6	9

6	3	1	4	2	5
4	5	2	3	6	1
3	2	4	5	1	6
1	6	5	2	4	3
5	4	6	1	3	2
2	1	3	6	5	4

7/29

KENKEN



Trademark KenKen, LLC Distributed by Andrews McMeel

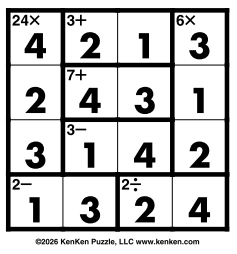
©2026 KenKen Puzzle, LLC www.kenken.com

1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

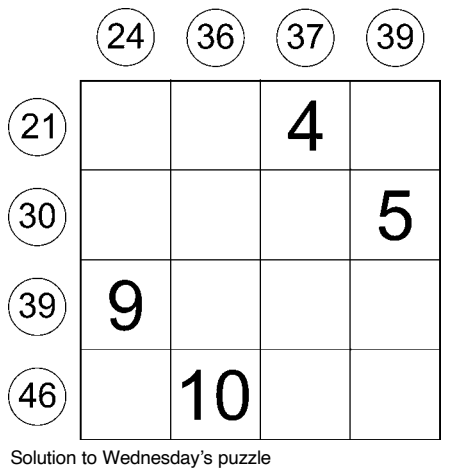


Trademark KenKen, LLC Distributed by Andrews McMeel

©2026 KenKen Puzzle, LLC www.kenken.com

KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **EXPERT**



Solution to Wednesday's puzzle

13	14	10	12
2	3	6	11
9	7	5	16
8	15	1	4

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

©2026 Kubok. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. All rights reserved. 7/30/26

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 7/30

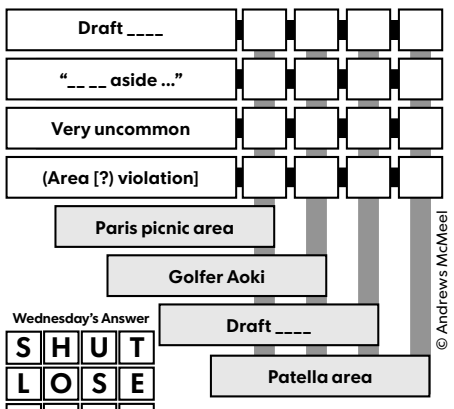
Find and Circle:
Five types of teeth ☑☐☐☐☐
Three five-letter boats ☐☐☐
Three five-letter zodiac signs ☐☐☐
Three months ☐☐☐
Two words with AIR in the middle ☐☐

Wednesday's answer: TACK NECK SACK DECK LACK BACK PACK KICK / ALPHA BRAVO CHARLIE / MARINES ARMY NAVY / BOLIVIA PERU / COLA

© Andrews McMeel

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/30



© Andrews McMeel

Wednesday's Answer

S	H	U	T
L	O	S	E
O	P	E	N
B	E	S	T

7/29

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/30

1. **SOLID**
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____
7. ____ **HERE**

Clues:
1. 1980s pop music show
2. Fancy timepiece
3. Small leather strap
4. Session for student musicians
5. Student jokester
6. Goof off; act silly
7. In this area

Wednesday's Answer

LOG	CABIN
CABIN	FEVER
FEVER	PITCH
PITCH	IN
IN	TOUCH
TOUCH	FOOTBALL
FOOTBALL	COACH

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

© Andrews McMeel

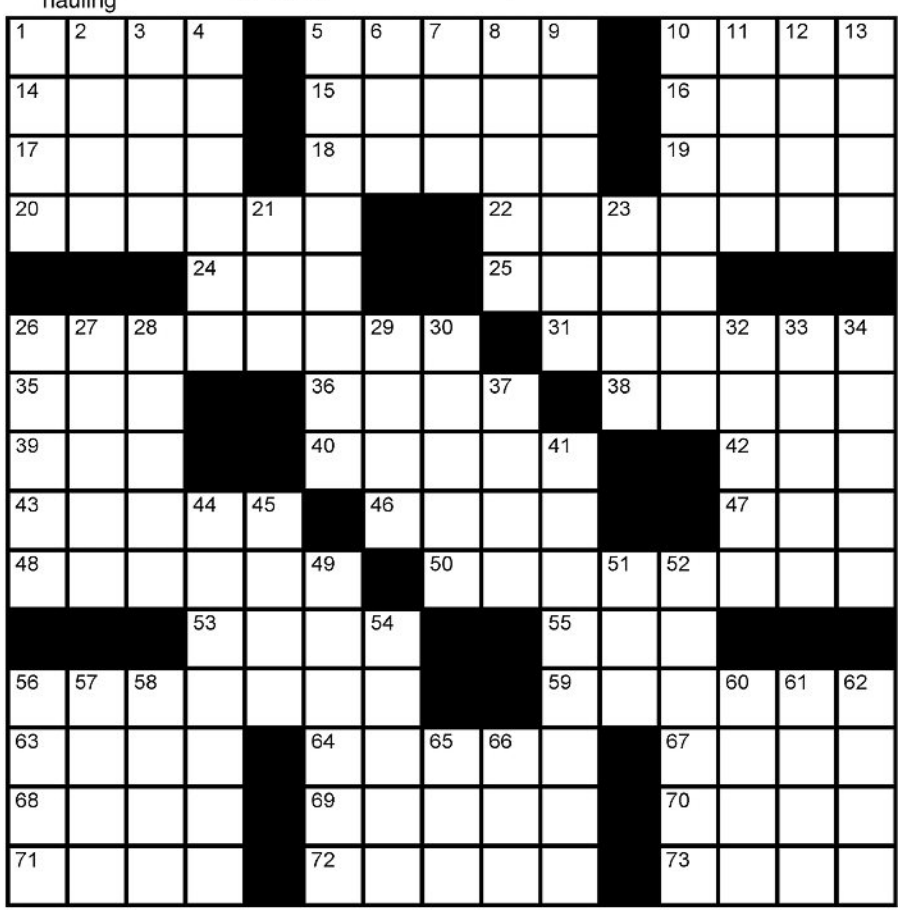
BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Stack
5 Notes played together
10 Attempt
14 Stew pot
15 Broadcast portion
16 — Nostra
17 Painter's paints
18 Actress — Witherspoon
19 Eject
20 Tried
22 Goes as a plus-one
24 Work (Prefix)
25 Crisp cookie
26 Deceives
31 Has faith in
35 Elec. unit
36 Water-filled trench
38 Divide
39 Hydro
40 "Viva Las Vegas" star
42 Japanese sash
43 Car type
46 Reveal
47 Brooch
48 Football team
50 Layabout
53 Send forth
55 Bill and —
56 Cable for hauling
59 Raps
63 Operatic song
64 First in quality
67 Horse's hair
68 Pain
69 "To — — human ..."
70 A Great Lake
71 Otherwise
72 Handed out cards
73 Soaks flax

DOWN
1 Owl's cry
2 Writer — Wiesel
3 "— fair in love and war"
4 Soft color
5 Pinochle, e.g. (2 wds.)
6 Color
7 "— on a Grecian Urn"
8 Ascends
9 "What — kill you, only ..."
10 Take eagerly (2 wds.)
11 — de force
12 Aide (Abbr.)
13 Cudgels
21 Sooner than
23 Jalopies
26 En —
27 Drive
28 Digging implement
29 Blockhead
30 Rescued
32 Skier's place
33 Leg bone
34 Be frugal
37 Flooring piece
41 Most lax
44 So-so
45 Verne's captain
49 Bit
51 "— Quixote"
52 QB — Esiason
54 — Haute
56 Make a recording of
57 Spoken
58 Comes in first
60 Concern
61 Grow together
62 Perceives
65 Nest-egg letters
66 A thousand thou

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

7-30-26 © 2026 UFS, Dist. by Andrews McMeel for UFS



QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/30

© Andrews McMeel

Wednesday's Answer

S	H	U	T
L	O	S	E
O	P	E	N
B	E	S	T

7/29

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/30

1. **SOLID**
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____
5. ____
6. ____
7. ____ **HERE**

Clues:
1. 1980s pop music show
2. Fancy timepiece
3. Small leather strap
4. Session for student musicians
5. Student jokester
6. Goof off; act silly
7. In this area

Wednesday's Answer

LOG	CABIN
CABIN	FEVER
FEVER	PITCH
PITCH	IN
IN	TOUCH
TOUCH	FOOTBALL
FOOTBALL	COACH

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

© Andrews McMeel

DON'T QUOTE ME®

Actor Denzel Washington makes this point.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
DEAL MUD PART PRAY RAIN YOU

"YOU ___ FOR ___, ___ GOTTA ___ WITH THE ___ TOO. THAT'S A ___ OF IT." 7/30

Wednesday's Answer: "Hatred of domestic work is a natural and admirable result of civilization." - Rebecca West

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 shed light on (9)	
2 able to figure things out (11)	
3 labyrinths (5)	
4 historical novelist Kate (5)	
5 "pet" irritation (5)	
6 pp, to a musician (10)	
7 "work tops" (7)	

OU	EXP	NED	EVE	MA
QUI	NI	FUL	BL	RES
IMO	OU	PIA	LAI	PE
RCE	SES	NN	ZES	SS

Wednesday's Answers: 1. VEHICLES 2. OCCURRING 3. HALF 4. WITHERED 5. SHAGGY 6. KEITH 7. TURNIPS 7/30

© 2026 Blue Ox Family Games, Inc., Dist. by Andrews McMeel

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LTTEI

ONRWF

MPTPOR

IMFYDO

There's no one I'd rather have introducing my book.
Of course. The pleasure will be all mine.
ASKED TO WRITE THE INTRODUCTION FOR A NEW BOOK, THE AUTHOR WAS LOOKING ---

Get the free **JUST JUMBLE** app • Follow us on **Facebook**

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

"_____" ___ ___

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: ABOVE CHIDE RIDDLE ISLAND
Answer: Trusting medical advice from the Internet can be — ILL-ADVISED

©2026 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All Rights Reserved.

TELEVISION

‘Shark Lady’ inks a tattoo record on Discovery Channel

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY

Shark Week 2026 has found its ultimate inked ambassador for Discovery Channel’s annual shark frenzy of TV programming.

Emily Morrison, better known as “Shark Lady Emily,” shows off a Guinness World Record 106 shark tattoos in the adventure tour operator’s Shark Week debut, “My Strange Shark Addiction” (Friday, July 31, 10 ET/PT). By the end of the show, which features two tattoo additions, Morrison has 108, besting her own inked record.

It’s a consuming – and permanent – passion for the self-described shark biologist and advocate.

“Because we do about two or three sharks every (tattoo) session, plus a tooth here and there, we’ve figured out the total price to be about $20,000 and about 300 hours in the chair,” Morrison tells USA TODAY. “There are a lot of tattoos, so that makes sense. I don’t have a passion for anything else to be tattooed on my body forever.”

“Shark Lady Emily” Morrison has 108 tattoos, earning recognition from the Guinness World Records. She says there’s still plenty of room on the back and legs for more tattoos. PROVIDED BY DISCOVERY CHANNEL

How did Shark Lady’s tattoo obsession start?

Morrison, 45, whose Florida-based tour company Shark Lady Enterprises is one of her three businesses, first inked a great white shark tattoo on her lower back in 1999. After her 12-year marriage ended in 2022, Morrison started living her “shark life” with more underwater adventures. After a life-changing “special” interaction with a whale shark, the shark tattoo tribute started.

“I thought that was a great idea and maybe I should have more shark interactions and get them tatted,” she says. “And as more interactions happened, I started finding new places to put them.”

After constantly fielding questions on whether she held the Guinness World Record for shark tattoos, Morrison found there was no existing record.

“So I applied, and lo and behold they accepted it,” says Morrison, who is presented with the Guinness World Record title for the most sharks tattooed on the body (female) during the Shark Week show. Her tattoos include two great white sharks (on her lower back and neck), two zebra sharks, two tiger sharks, two sand tiger sharks and a school of 13 hammerhead sharks.

Which tattoo hurt the most?

The side-of-the-head tattoos actually weren’t so bad, Morrison says, and numbing cream helps ease the sting of her leg tattoos.

“Behind the knee was pretty painful, but everything else was pretty tolerable,” she says. One exception was the broadnose sevengill shark wrapped around her right ankle, where tattooing directly over the bone proved especially painful. Morrison says she nearly had to stop her tattoo artist, Emma Knox Flavin, during the session.

“It was right on the shin. I swear to you that was the closest I have ever come to being, ‘Oh my God stop!’ That was pain.”

Will the next tattoo be on Shark Lady’s face?

Morrison also weighs getting a shark tattoo across her face in “My Strange Shark Addiction,” though the debate is played up with a healthy dose of “Shark Week” hyperbole.

“I’m serious about doing it,” she says. “It just wouldn’t be a large one. Maybe a tooth or something small.”

The next tattoos will be two more great white sharks Morrison came across during an Australia trip.

“I was able to name one of the females, so I’m definitely tattooing her. They’re going on my right thigh.”

Though she doesn’t know how many tattoos she will get in total, there’s still plenty of room.

“I have a lot more space than people think, on my legs and even on my back. And I can put small sharks in between the existing tattoos. I’m just going to let them flow like I’ve always done.”

Do shark tattoo records help sharks?

The annual debate surrounding Discovery Channel’s 37th Shark Week is whether its increasingly entertainment-focused programming still advances shark awareness and conservation. Morrison argues that “My Strange Shark Addiction” – and even her tattoos – promote shark education and spark conversation in a lighthearted way.

“Shark education is one of my main things,” she says. “I hope this show is a conversation starter.”

Rossum

Continued from Page 1D

nod to Greek mythology,” Rossum says. “The Furies were three angels of vengeance, and Medusa is mentioned as a woman who had been wronged and violated, so she became a villain.”

Rossum, who shares a 5-year-old daughter and a 3-year-old son with her husband, Sam Esmail, stepped up her stunt performance and put on 10 pounds of muscle to play Black. Preparation required daily 90-minute workouts with low reps of high weight and cutting out sugar with “lots of snacking on Chomps beef snacks.”

“Please sponsor me for Season 2. When you’re eating that much meat, you don’t have room for sugar,” she says. “I loved the journey, like watching the definition happen and the muscles start to pop and feeling like I could throw my 45-pound kid in the air with ease.”

Rossum – who has become far more selective with her projects since Showtime’s “Shameless” ended in 2021 after 11 seasons and the birth of her children – was able to take on “Furious,” which was shot primarily around her home in New York City.

The 10 pounds of muscle, however, has not stayed. “Sadly, I’m off it now.

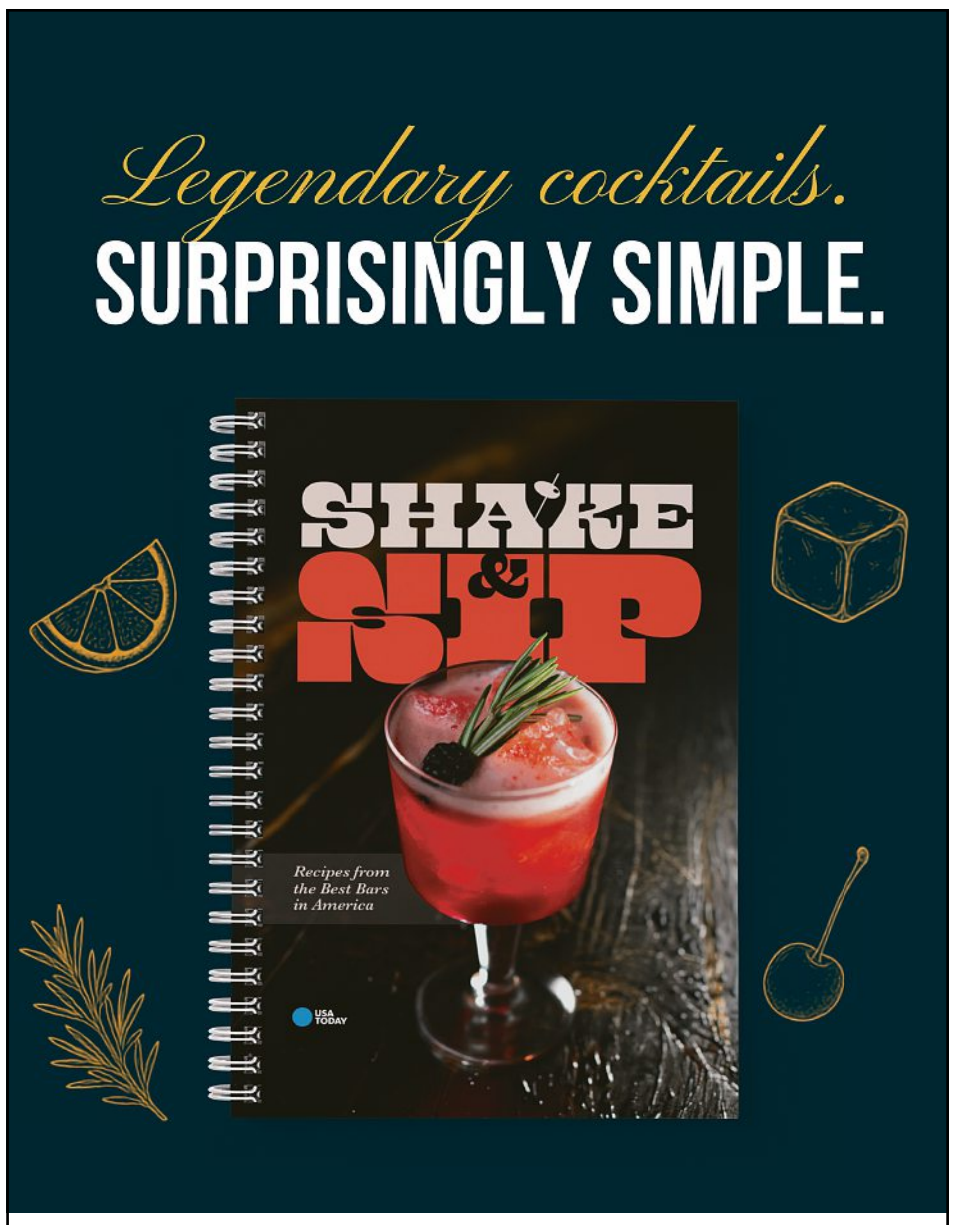
Emmy Rossum put on 10 pounds of muscle to play FBI agent Alice Black in “Furious.” PROVIDED BY HULU

That’s a full-time job.”

Knicks fan Rossum missed out on the championship insanity

The increased return to work had some downsides. Rossum was in Rhode Island shooting “Rubber Hut” during much of the New York Knicks championship run, when her beloved NBA team ended its 53-year title drought. Frequent night shoots prevented Rossum, a native New Yorker, from being courtside with the other celebrity Knicks fans.

“It was heartbreaking that I couldn’t be there,” says Rossum, who took over a World Cup party to watch the final game from a rooftop bar. “It’s been a long time coming. I don’t know if I’ll ever come down. Like I’m wearing all my Knicks merch. And that’s not going away.”



A TOAST TO THE BEST BARS IN AMERICA!

From a modern Manhattan in NYC to a Pacific Coast gin fizz in Portland, America’s craft cocktail scene is alive, inventive and deeply local. “**Shake and Sip**” takes you inside the nation’s best bars — the hidden gems, the legendary haunts and the rising stars — with original drink recipes straight from the bartenders themselves.

Iconic bars. Signature recipes. One unforgettable tour of American craft cocktail culture.

Books ship November 2026 in time for holiday gift-giving. Reserve your copies today!

SAVE 10% WHEN YOU ORDER EARLY!

Learn more and preorder at

BestBars.USATbook.com

USA TODAY

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mourners carry the coffins of members of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, who were killed by earlier air strikes, during a funeral in Baghdad on July 29. THAIER AL-SUDANI/REUTERS

ATTACKS SIGNAL NEW ESCALATION

U.S. launches fresh Iran strikes; drone hits tanker in Egypt

Marwa Rashad, Mohamed Ezz, Yasmine Ghania and Nandita Bose
REUTERS

CAIRO – A drone hit a U.S.-owned gas storage tanker at Egypt's Mediterranean port of Damietta, British maritime security firm Ambrey said in an initial assessment on July 29, and U.S. Central Command said the United States conducted new air strikes in Iran, as the Middle East conflict appeared to expand beyond its main fronts.

The U.S. strikes started at 8 p.m. ET on July 29, Central Command said. "The strikes are a powerful response to yesterday's attempted Iranian attacks on U.S. forces based in the Middle East," it said.

Earlier, a statement from Egypt's petroleum ministry confirmed a fire at the port but made no mention of a drone attack. It was not immediately clear who was responsible.

The drone hit floating storage tanker Energos Winter, causing a fire that then spread to another vessel, three trading sources familiar with the incident said. The fire was dealt with immediately with no casualties, the petroleum ministry said.

The incident, which President Donald Trump said he had been briefed on, came amid a sharp escalation in the conflict, with Iran firing missiles at U.S. forces in Jordan and the United States and Saudi Arabia striking Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq.

A woman places an American flag at a memorial for fallen U.S. soldier Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad outside her home in New York City on July 29. SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

Alongside Yemen's Houthi group declaring a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia, the latest exchanges suggest the conflict is spreading further than it has since the United States and Israel started bombing Iran in February.

Trump earlier vowed to retaliate against Iran for firing on U.S. troops days after he halted air strikes.

"So it's our turn," Trump told reporters at the White House. He said Washington would see if there was an agreement with Iran at some point, "but we're going to hit them very hard."

Iran confirmed overnight that it had fired on U.S. bases in Jordan and at ships in the Strait of Hormuz, and also spurned an Omani proposal to jointly manage the strait.

Trump had said operations against Iran would last only a few weeks when he launched them in February but

See WAR, Page 4NN

Fed opts to hold rates steady

Warsh says he won't 'waver' on inflation fight

Ann Saphir and Michael S. Derby
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The Federal Reserve held interest rates steady on July 29, a choice that may intensify questions about how U.S. central bank chief Kevin Warsh will deliver on his commitment to bring inflation back down to the 2% target.

The widely expected decision to leave the benchmark interest rate in the 3.5%-3.75% range drew dissents from three of the 12 members of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee who "preferred" a quarter-percentage-point hike at this meeting.

Those same three officials – the presidents of the Fed's Cleveland, Dallas and Minneapolis regional banks – had also dissented at Jerome Powell's final meeting as central bank chief in late April. In that case, they favored removing the implied promise of lower rates in the policy statements.

Warsh, who took over as head of the Fed in May, has said he has "no tolerance" for inflation that has been running above the central bank's target for more than five years, and up until June was accelerating as the war in the Middle East pushed up global fuel and food prices, and investment in data centers and other spending tied to artificial intelligence drove up demand.

"Inflation remains elevated relative to the Committee's 2% goal," the Fed said in a short policy statement after the end of its latest two-day meeting. It replicated word for word all of the June 17 statement's assessment of the economy.

The Fed noted that economic activity is "expanding at a solid pace," saying, as it did in June, that job gains "have kept pace with the workforce, and the unemployment rate has changed little."

Speaking in a news conference after the release of the policy decision,

See FED, Page 3NN

Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh has said he has "no tolerance" for inflation. WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

Blast followed quake in Japanese mall disaster

Anton Bridge, Yuka Obayashi and Joseph Campbell
REUTERS

KUMAMOTO, Japan – Workers in a mall in southern Japan described being thrown to the floor or enveloped in a disorienting cloud of dust by a massive magnitude 7.1 quake that rattled the building on July 28.

They were the lucky ones. Just over an hour later, a deadly disaster struck.

Hundreds of shoppers and store employees, quickly ushered by staff to evacuate, watched on in horror as an explosion ripped through the building, exposing the structure's steel beams and catapulting debris across the parking lot.

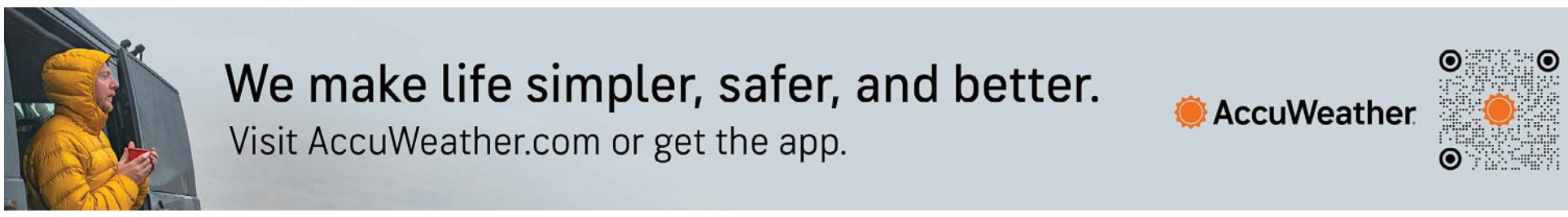
First responders, initially fearful of entering the wreckage, hauled eight people from the partially collapsed site early on July 29, among them three dead. The status of three store workers remains unknown, mall operator Aeon said, adding that it was investigating a possible gas leak.

"I thought a bomb had gone off," Takateru Sonoda, 41, who runs a combined hair salon and cafe near the mall, told news agency Jiji Press.

"There were people calling on others

See MALL, Page 4NN

Rescuers work at the damaged Aeon Mall in Kashima, Japan, on July 29. KIM KYUNG-HOON/REUTERS

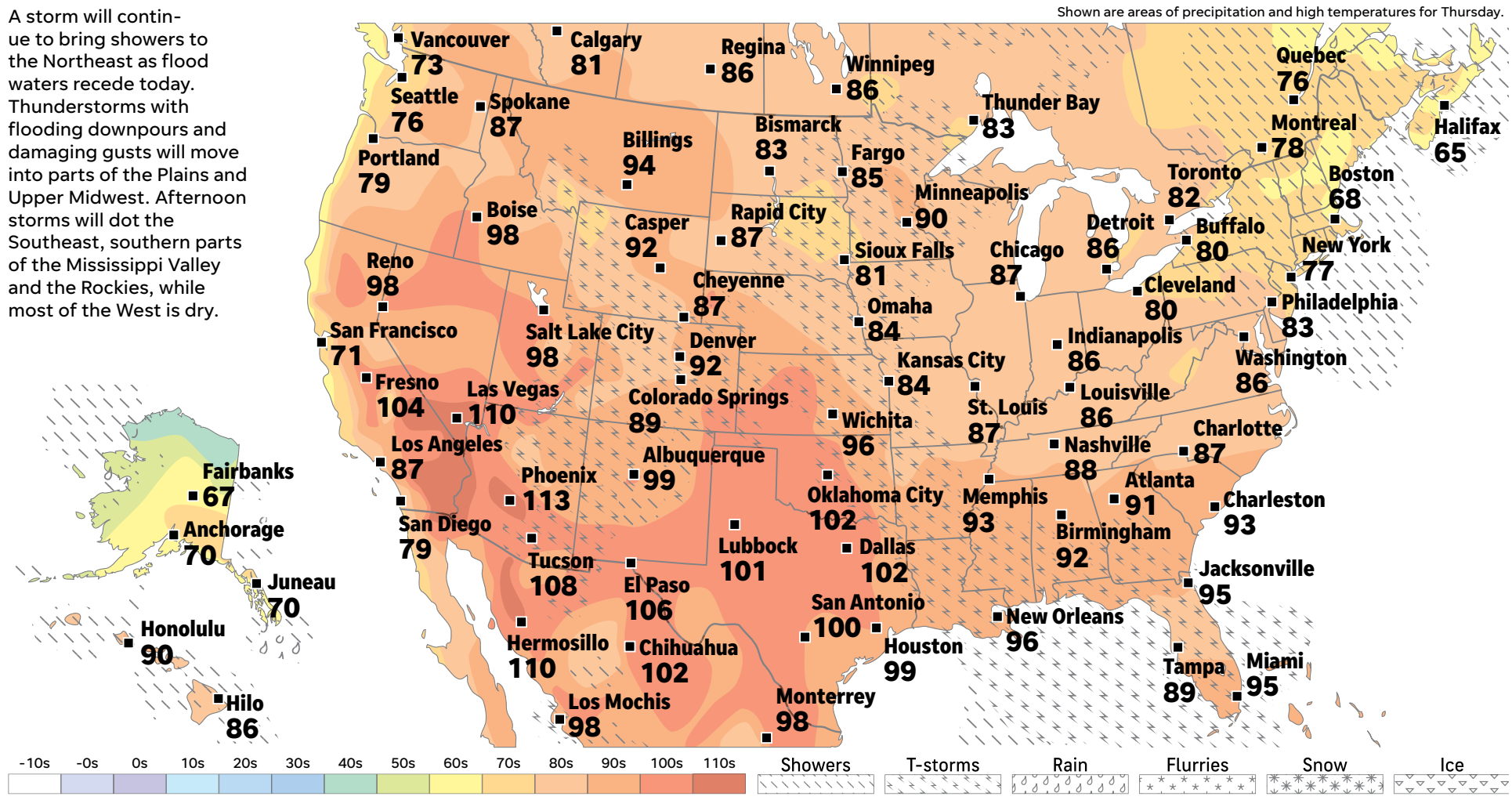


NATIONAL SUMMARY

A storm will continue to bring showers to the Northeast as flood waters recede today. Thunderstorms with flooding downpours and damaging gusts will move into parts of the Plains and Upper Midwest. Afternoon storms will dot the Southeast, southern parts of the Mississippi Valley and the Rockies, while most of the West is dry.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Thursday.



WEDNESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High: **114** at Death Valley, CA
Low: **36** at Truckee, CA
Precip: **5.34"** at Albany, NY

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High: **119** at Adrar, Algeria
Low: **1** at Perito Moreno, Argentina
Precip: **6.26"** at Pathein, Myanmar

TODAY IN HISTORY

Giant hailstones pelted Fort Collins, Colo., on July 30, 1979. Baseball-sized hail battered cars, golf ball-sized hail clubbed houses and grapefruit-sized hail left a sour taste for residents.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: What is the driest major city in the world?

A: Cairo, Egypt, averages only 1 inch of rain each year

NATIONAL CITIES THURSDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
● Aberdeen, SD	79/67/t	71
Abilene, TX	101/77/pc	34
Accomac, VA	82/64/s	40
Adrian, MI	87/59/s	75
Akron, OH	79/57/s	25
Alamogordo, NM	106/77/c	49
Alexandria, VA	86/70/s	50
Alliance, OH	81/58/s	25
● Amarillo, TX	103/74/pc	75
Ames, IA	85/68/t	75
Anderson, SC	90/68/s	67
Appleton, WI	89/68/pc	75
Asheville, NC	81/57/s	55
Ashland, OH	80/60/s	25
Athens, GA	92/66/s	42
Augusta, GA	93/69/s	51
Austin, TX	101/76/s	75
● Bartlesville, OK	96/76/t	75
Battle Creek, MI	85/62/s	75
Bedford, IN	83/63/s	38
Binghamton, NY	72/59/pc	40
Bluffton, SC	94/78/pc	45
Bremerton, WA	77/50/pc	37
● Brockton, MA	68/62/sh	25
Brownwood, TX	100/73/s	33
Burlington, IA	84/69/pc	63
Burlington, NC	86/62/s	51
● Burlington, VT	75/64/sh	40
Cambridge, OH	83/55/s	43
Camdenton, MO	84/72/t	42
Canandaigua, NY	76/59/pc	40
Canton, OH	81/59/s	25
Carlsbad, NM	103/75/s	82
Chambersburg, PA	84/62/s	39
Cherry Hill, NJ	81/67/pc	50
Cincinnati, OH	84/64/s	60
Clarksville, TN	88/64/s	56
Coldwater, MI	84/59/s	75
Columbus, OH	83/63/s	43
Corning, NY	75/56/sh	24
Corpus Christi, TX	96/77/s	75
● Daytona Beach, FL	88/76/t	75
Deming, NM	105/74/s	61
DeRidder, LA	95/77/t	58
Des Moines, IA	87/69/t	75
Detroit, MI	86/65/s	75
Devils Lake, ND	83/61/pc	37
Dover, NH	69/61/sh	25
El Paso, TX	106/80/pc	75
Elmira, NY	75/56/pc	25
Erie, PA	78/60/s	40
Eugene, OR	82/50/pc	25

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Evansville, IN	86/65/s	75
Fall River, MA	69/62/sh	25
Farmington, NM	96/65/t	50
Fayetteville, NC	88/66/s	55
Fond du Lac, WI	88/65/pc	75
Fort Myers, FL	91/79/t	75
● Fort Smith, AR	94/78/t	41
Framingham, MA	68/61/sh	25
Freeport, IL	85/63/pc	75
Fremont, OH	84/63/s	51
Fort Collins, CO	94/63/t	75
Gadsden, AL	91/63/s	47
● Gainesville, FL	89/75/t	75
Galesburg, IL	83/65/pc	75
Gastonia, NC	87/62/s	55
Glen Rose, TX	101/78/s	34
Gonzales, LA	95/79/t	64
Great Falls, MT	94/60/s	109
Green Bay, WI	88/66/t	75
Greenville, SC	88/64/s	67
Hackensack, NJ	78/66/sh	40
Hagerstown, MD	83/64/s	39
● Hattiesburg, MS	95/76/t	36
Henderson, KY	85/63/s	75
Hendersonville, NC	83/57/s	55
Herkimer, NY	77/58/sh	31
Hillsdale, MI	84/59/s	75
Holland, MI	83/64/s	75
Hornell, NY	76/55/pc	28
● Houma, LA	94/78/t	58
Howell, MI	86/61/s	75
● Hutchinson, KS	97/75/t	39
Hyannis, MA	69/63/sh	25
Indianapolis, IN	86/65/s	25
Iowa City, IA	85/68/c	66
Ithaca, NY	73/57/pc	40
Jackson, MS	94/76/t	75
Jackson, TN	91/65/pc	44
Jacksonville, FL	95/74/t	75
Jacksonville, NC	88/69/pc	55
Kent, OH	80/59/s	75
Kewanee, IL	83/66/pc	75
Keyser, WV	84/58/s	37
Kinston, NC	88/65/s	55
Knoxville, TN	83/62/s	57
Lafayette, IN	84/62/s	51
Lafayette, LA	94/79/t	58
Lakeland, FL	86/76/t	75
Lansing, MI	87/62/s	75
Las Cruces, NM	103/74/c	48
Lebanon, PA	83/63/pc	43
● Leesburg, FL	86/76/t	75

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Levittown, PA	81/66/pc	50
Lincoln, IL	83/63/pc	75
Louisville, KY	86/67/s	75
Lubbock, TX	101/76/s	25
Manitowoc, WI	85/68/pc	75
Mansfield, OH	80/60/s	53
Marshall, NC	80/55/s	55
● Marshfield, WI	88/65/pc	75
Massillon, OH	82/58/s	25
McLean, VA	85/67/s	50
● Melbourne, FL	87/75/t	75
Memphis, TN	93/74/pc	93
Middletown, NY	77/61/sh	33
Milford, MA	67/61/sh	25
Milwaukee, WI	86/67/pc	75
Monroe, MI	86/63/s	75
Monroe, LA	94/77/t	60
Montgomery, AL	95/73/t	50
Muncie, IN	84/62/s	45
Murfreesboro, TN	87/60/s	56
Naples, FL	91/80/t	75
Nashville, TN	88/63/s	56
Neptune, NJ	79/67/pc	45
New Bedford, MA	71/62/sh	25
New Bern, NC	88/67/pc	55
New Philadelphia, OH	82/56/s	25
Newark, OH	83/57/s	43
Newton, NJ	77/61/sh	40
New York, NY	77/66/sh	40
Norwich, CT	71/61/sh	31
● Ocala, FL	88/76/t	75
● Oklahoma City, OK	102/75/t	65
Opelousas, LA	93/77/t	58
Oshkosh, WI	87/66/pc	75
Palm Beach, FL	92/80/t	25
Palm Springs, CA	114/82/s	105
● Panama City, FL	90/80/t	75
Pekin, IL	85/66/pc	75
● Pensacola, FL	94/78/t	75
Peoria, IL	85/66/pc	75
Petersburg, VA	89/63/s	44
Phoenix, AZ	113/92/s	100
Port Huron, MI	80/57/s	43
Portsmouth, NH	69/64/sh	25
Poughkeepsie, NY	76/61/sh	33
Providence, RI	70/64/sh	39
Pueblo, CO	98/66/t	75
Quincy, MA	67/62/sh	25
Redding, CA	102/67/s	49
Reno, NV	98/61/s	75
Ravenna, OH	81/59/s	75
Richmond, IN	83/61/s	67

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Rochester, NY	78/59/pc	31
Rockford, IL	86/63/pc	75
Ruidoso, NM	91/65/c	54
Salem, OR	81/52/pc	25
● Salina, KS	96/75/t	34
Salinas, CA	72/53/pc	25
Salisbury, MD	84/65/pc	46
San Angelo, TX	99/74/pc	32
● Sarasota, FL	88/81/t	75
Savannah, GA	95/75/pc	43
Sheboygan, WI	85/66/pc	75
Shelby, NC	87/62/s	55
Sherman, TX	101/81/s	41
Shreveport, LA	96/78/t	68
Silver City, NM	98/71/t	56
● Sioux Falls, SD	81/68/t	40
Somerset, PA	76/54/pc	36
Somerville, NJ	80/63/pc	45
South Bend, IN	83/63/s	75
Spartanburg, SC	88/65/s	67
Springfield, IL	84/66/pc	75
● Springfield, MO	90/73/t	42
St. Augustine, FL	91/76/t	75
● St. Cloud, MN	90/67/t	68
St. George, UT	104/77/s	25
Staunton, VA	83/55/s	40
Stevens Point, WI	91/66/pc	75
Stockton, CA	98/59/s	44
Stroudsburg, PA	79/62/pc	40
Stuart, FL	89/77/t	25
Sturgis, MI	84/60/s	75
Tallahassee, FL	92/75/t	75
● Thibodaux, LA	95/77/t	58
● Topeka, KS	85/75/t	35
Tuscaloosa, AL	95/70/t	61
Utica, NY	77/59/sh	29
Ventura, CA	74/61/s	52
Victorville, CA	105/64/s	133
Vineland, NJ	81/64/pc	50
Visalia, CA	103/64/s	50
Washington, DC	86/71/s	50
● Watertown, SD	80/66/t	55
Wausau, WI	88/66/pc	75
Waynesboro, PA	83/62/s	39
White Plains, NY	75/63/sh	32
Wichita Falls, TX	104/79/pc	60
Wilmington, DE	83/65/pc	46
Wilmington, NC	90/69/pc	55
Wisconsin Rapids, WI	91/65/t	75
Wooster, OH	80/57/s	25
Worcester, MA	66/61/sh	25
York, PA	84/63/pc	43

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W
Acapulco	92/77/pc	93/78/pc
● Addis Ababa	71/55/r	71/55/sh
Algiers	91/69/s	96/72/s
Amman	97/73/s	99/75/s
Amsterdam	80/63/pc	76/59/sh
Ankara	86/58/s	85/58/s
Asuncion	88/74/s	93/75/s
Athens	92/77/s	91/76/s
Auckland	61/52/s	60/47/sh
Baghdad	118/91/pc	119/94/pc
● Bangkok	90/79/r	90/79/r
Beijing	94/80/sh	93/80/pc
Beirut	90/79/s	91/79/s
Belgrade	96/69/s	98/71/s
Berlin	100/68/s	87/65/pc
Bogota	67/51/r	67/48/sh
Brussels	84/62/pc	83/57/pc
Bucharest	90/63/s	91/64/s
Budapest	97/67/s	101/67/s
Buenos Aires	61/58/pc	68/61/r
Cairo	100/79/pc	101/78/pc
Cape Town	70/43/pc	75/43/pc
Caracas	91/77/r	90/76/r
Casablanca	89/71/s	95/70/s
● Colombo	89/80/r	86/79/r
● Copenhagen	81/62/s	72/57/s
Damascus	105/70/s	105/68/s
Dublin	68/48/sh	67/48/pc
Geneva	97/67/s	87/64/t
Guatemala City	82/64/t	81/63/t
● Hanoi	90/79/r	90/79/r
Harare	75/41/pc	74/44/pc
Havana	93/74/r	93/74/t
Helsinki	70/64/pc	71/61/t
Hong Kong	86/80/t	85/80/t
● Jakarta	92/78/sh	92/78/t
Jerusalem	91/72/s	92/73/s
Johannesburg	67/37/pc	63/36/pc
Kabul	93/68/pc	90/68/pc
Khartoum	102/84/s	103/82/s
Kyiv	78/62/pc	83/64/s
Kingston	94/82/pc	93/80/c
La Paz	60/32/s	60/26/sh
Lagos	84/75/r	85/75/t
Lima	79/69/pc	76/68/pc
Lisbon	83/65/s	85/65/s
London	81/59/pc	78/56/s
Madrid	103/71/s	101/68/s
● Manila	92/79/t	94/79/t
● Mexico City	78/56/sh	79/56/r
Milan	102/75/s	102/76/s
Mombasa	85/70/pc	86/70/s
Montevideo	62/54/pc	73/60/r
Montreal	78/64/sh	82/66/sh
● Moscow	70/59/t	77/57/s
Nairobi	76/57/pc	76/57/r
New Delhi	93/81/r	93/80/r
Panama City	93/76/t	91/77/t
Paris	90/67/sh	87/63/pc
Port-au-Prince	102/73/t	99/71/t
Rio de Janeiro	78/69/pc	76/66/sh
Riyadh	112/85/pc	113/87/s
Rome	95/72/s	95/71/s
San Jose	87/71/r	86/71/t
● San Salvador	93/71/s	93/69/t
Santiago	67/48/s	56/38/r
Sao Paulo	72/58/c	76/58/pc
Sarajevo	94/60/s	95/62/s
Shanghai	103/83/t	101/82/t
Singapore	89/80/sh	92/80/t
Stockholm	81/62/pc	74/53/pc
Sydney	62/44/s	63/48/pc
Taipei	93/80/c	94/79/r
Tegucigalpa	88/69/t	86/66/t
Tehran	96/75/s	95/76/pc
Tokyo	94/82/t	94/81/sh
Toronto	82/59/s	82/67/c
Tunis	94/76/s	97/74/s
Vancouver	73/57/s	74/61/pc
Vienna	99/70/s	102/72/s
Warsaw	90/68/s	96/69/t
Yerevan	90/66/s	90/68/s
Zagreb	97/63/s	100/66/s
Zurich	100/61/s	92/63/t

● Denotes possible travel delays Thursday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

©2026; forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather® Superior Accuracy™ for Better Decisions Visit AccuWeather.com

Disease fears cut lettuce sales

U.S. diners also avoiding some restaurant chains

Tom Polansek and Anuja Bharat Mistry
REUTERS

U.S. consumers are steering clear of some restaurant chains and buying less lettuce in grocery stores as a multistate outbreak of a parasitic disease fuels confusion over what is safe to eat, according to foot traffic data and industry sources.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has linked the outbreak of cyclosporiasis to iceberg lettuce that was served at Taco Bell restaurants and sourced from privately held Taylor Farms' operations in central Mexico.

But cases have continued to rise even after Taylor Farms said it removed all potentially affected products from the marketplace. The increase has stoked uncertainty and fears about other products that may be infecting people with the disease that causes explosive, watery diarrhea.

Health officials have said they are investigating additional potential sources of infection. In North Carolina, parsley and cilantro were commonly identified ingredients among people who fell ill, though there could be multiple sources of exposure, according to the state's health department.

As consumers wait for clarity, they have cut back on fresh lettuce and visits to restaurant chains whose menus rely heavily on the greens.

Healthy adults can continue to eat leafy greens, as long as they are not in states such as Michigan that have been hit hard by the disease, said Dr. Tyler Evans, CEO of a public health organization called the Wellness Equity Alliance and a former New York City chief medical officer.

"If this were some recall on candy or licorice, I'd say just don't eat it," Evans said. "But the nutritional benefit of leafy greens is significant, so we don't want to tell people to avoid it at all costs."

Foot traffic at Taco Bell, owned by Yum Brands, has slumped every day since July 13. It dropped by 20.8% on Thursday, July 23, compared to the Thursday average between Jan. 1 and July 6, according to the latest data from analytics firm Placer.ai.

Foot traffic was also down by 12.2% at salad chain Chopt; 1.4% at Chipotle Mexican Grill; and 3.1% at Panera Bread on July 23, compared to the prior six-month average for Thursdays, the firm said.

Chipotle declined to comment on the decline, while Taco Bell, Chopt and Panera Bread did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Taco Bell has said it removed affected Taylor Farms lettuce from its restaurants as of July 17.

"Restaurant chains that saw significant foot traffic declines following the outbreak of cyclospora in recent weeks are still seeing fewer customers," a Placer.ai representative said, adding that the worst may be behind them.

People contract cyclosporiasis after eating food or drinking water contaminated with human feces containing the microscopic parasite cyclospora.

The U.S. outbreak has resulted in 6,707 lab-confirmed cases, with health authorities aware of more than 11,500 additional suspected cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Michigan, health officials reported 9,680 cases on July 28, up 427 cases from a day earlier.

Some large retailers and restaurants have stopped sourcing produce from the region of central Mexico linked to the expanding outbreak because of concerns about widespread contamination, former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said on July 27.

Paul Sellew, CEO and founder of Little Leaf Farms, which grows lettuce in the Eastern United States, said worries about infections have driven down sales by double digits.

According to market research firm NielsenIQ's data, U.S. unit sales for fresh lettuce in the week ending July 18 were down 9% from a week earlier and 19% from two weeks before.

"The entire fresh produce category at retail is down," Sellew said. "The consumer has been motivated by fear."

To reassure customers, Massachusetts-based Little Leaf Farms has sought to educate them about company production practices it says are designed to keep harvests safe.

"How we grow is so fundamentally different that there's no way that these issues could affect our product," Sellew said. "Not all leafy greens are created equal."

Trump unveils plan for Dulles airport

$22B overhaul is latest project set for DC area

David Shepardson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump unveiled a $22 billion plan on July 29 to rebuild Washington Dulles International Airport by replacing concourses and adding a large parking garage while preserving the landmark main terminal.

The announcement is the latest in a series of major projects he has announced in and around the U.S. capital.

"It's considered one of the worst airports anywhere in the world, we're going to make it maybe the best with some hard work," Trump said, arguing it was time "for a major and long overdue renovation and reconstruction of Washington's really horribly thought of Dulles."

Trump, who was joined by United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy at the White House, has been pushing for an overhaul of the airport that is the main international gateway for the national capital region.

The plan includes 5 million square feet of new or renovated airport space. Duffy in May confirmed the federal government planned a $22 billion overhaul of Dulles.

The plan, one of the largest U.S. airport overhauls ever proposed, will be funded through municipal bonds but raises questions about what it will mean for the cost of flights. The airport authority had already approved a separate $7 billion capital plan for Dulles.

President Donald Trump uses a laser pointer on an airport model during an announcement about the Washington Dulles International Airport renovation in the Oval Office on July 29. KYLIE COOPER/REUTERS

Despite the criticism, Dulles was the fastest-growing large U.S. airport last year by passenger traffic. The airport had a record year in 2025, handling 29 million total passengers, up 6.4%. This fall, it will get a new 435,000-square-foot, 14-gate concourse serving United customers.

Critics say Dulles needs modernization and gripe about slow vehicles that transport passengers across the tarmac, which Duffy said will be phased out as part of the overhaul.

The Dulles project is the latest massive reconstruction project in the Washington area Trump is pushing for. Dulles is about 25 miles from the capital and opened in 1962.

Finnish architect Eero Saarinen designed the airport's terminal building, a distinctive structure with a sloping roof that sweeps up toward the sky on opposite sides. That building will remain, Trump said.

United is the largest carrier at Dulles, handling about 70% of the traffic.

The airport is operated by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority under a 50-year lease approved by Congress. The Airports Authority, working with airlines serving Dulles, will finance the new concourses and terminal facilities through municipal bonds while other parts of the new development could include public-private partnership investments.

Fed

Continued from Page 1NN

Warsh said, "We've begun a new chapter and we understand that the five-plus years of inflation above-target cannot be cured in nine weeks, or by a single month of modest price decreases. This Fed will not waver" on getting inflation back to the 2% target.

While he declined to say what's next for monetary policy, Warsh said, "I want to stress, of course, that decisions by this committee matter a great deal, and where necessary and appropriate, we will not hesitate to act."

He noted that bond yields since the Fed's last monetary policy meeting have risen notably – investors have priced in interest rate increases – and he welcomed that move, even while saying it did not mean the central bank needed to ratify it with action.

"I was comforted that markets in the inter-meeting period weren't reacting to us" and that traders and investors "weren't reacting to dots or to speeches" from the Fed, but instead relied on their own judgment, Warsh said. The dots refer to the so-called dot plot chart of rate projections from Fed policymakers that are released on a quarterly basis.

"We don't endorse any particular market move" even as officials observe market pricing "with keen interest," Warsh added.

Since the last Fed meeting in June, the Treasury market yield curve – which plots market-based interest rates at different bond maturities – had flattened, reflecting a sharper move up in the shorter-dated yields closely tied to Fed policy expectations than in those for longer-dated bonds that are more sensitive to the inflation outlook.

On July 29, however, that dynamic shifted and the curve steepened sharply as yields on 2-year Treasury notes fell while those for 10-year notes and 30-year bonds moved up. The 30-year bond yield, in fact, crossed above the 5.2% level for the first time since 2007.

Some economists said they now saw a path toward higher rates.

"At this stage, I think we should expect the FOMC to hike rates by 25 basis points in September unless the labor market data collapses, or core inflation prints closer to 2% annualized, which I do not expect in the July or August readings before the September FOMC," said Omair Sharif, founder and president of forecasting firm Inflation Insights.

The number of officials voting in favor of tighter policy suggests a change in Fed thinking, even though some analysts think the central bank can still hold off on hikes.

"The high number of dissents underscore that policymakers are increasingly more hawkish," Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide, said in a note. But she added that "the Fed can and should remain on hold this year since higher interest rates will not solve the energy supply shock from the Middle East nor slow AI [spending] that is driving up prices."

In leaving the policy rate pinned in the range it has been since December, Fed policymakers are embracing the idea that current borrowing costs are creating enough friction in the economy to reduce any inflation that isn't, like the effect of tariffs on goods prices, expected to fade on its own.

Warsh has expressed the expectation that rising productivity aided by AI will allow the economy to grow faster without also pushing up inflation.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Indexes close out sharply lower

AI-related chip stocks add to recent declines

Noel Randewich
REUTERS

Wall Street ended sharply lower on July 29 after the Federal Reserve held interest rates steady, with AI-related chip stocks adding to recent declines ahead of quarterly reports from Microsoft and Meta Platforms and the Nasdaq 100 index marking an 11% drop from its June record high.

The Fed's widely expected decision to leave the benchmark interest rate in the 3.5%-3.75% range drew dissents from three of the 12 members of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee who "preferred" a quarter-percentage-point hike at this meeting.

The benchmark S&P 500 hit its lowest level in a month, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index was down about 9% from its June record high.

The Nasdaq 100 index dropped 2.1%, extending recent losses as investors unloaded AI-related stocks due to ongoing concerns about heavy capital spending. That index is composed of the Nasdaq exchange's most valuable non-financial companies.

Investors had mostly expected the Fed to keep rates unchanged. Inflation has been running above the central bank's target for more than five years, and up until last month it was accelerating as the war in the Middle East pushed up global fuel and food prices.

"The Fed held pat, as expected. The bigger question now though becomes, how much pressure will they have to hike in September? Inflation is running hot and with surging crude oil, the market expects the next hike to indeed be in September," said Ryan Detrick, chief market strategist at Carson Group.

Investors worry that major U.S. companies are deepening a web of AI-linked investments and continuing to funnel billions into the emerging technology at the expense of free cash flow.

Meta Platforms dropped 4% in extended trade after the social media company said it now expects 2026 capital expenditure to be between $130 billion and $145 billion, compared with its prior forecast of $125 billion to $145 billion.

Also after the bell, Microsoft climbed 0.6% after it topped Wall Street estimates for quarterly cloud revenue growth, a sign its massive spending on AI infrastructure was paying off.

Meanwhile, competition from China has been heating up, both in the race to develop advanced chips and as Chinese firms roll out cheaper AI models.

Speaking to reporters, Fed chief Kevin Warsh said spending on AI was laying the groundwork for future growth.

AI-related chipmakers added to recent losses after a sixfold jump in SK Hynix's quarterly profit fell short of lofty investor expectations. The South Korean company's shares fell 10%.

AI infrastructure company Vertiv slumped 17% after missing quarterly revenue expectations.

The S&P 500 declined 1.52% to end the session at 7,316.15 points. The Nasdaq declined 1.74% to 24,442.94 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average declined 2.19% to 51,594.14 points.

Eight of the 11 S&P 500 sector indexes declined, led lower by industrials, down 3.24%, followed by a 2.5% loss in information technology.

Analysts on average expect S&P 500 aggregate second-quarter earnings to jump 40% from a year ago, with AI-related stocks accounting for much of that growth, according to LSEG I/B/E/S.

Ford Motor gained 2.1% after raising its annual profit outlook for a second time this year.

Lennox tumbled 21% after the HVAC solutions maker lowered its annual profit forecast.

Oil prices

Brent futures settled $6.65, or 7.91%, higher at $90.74 a barrel on July 29. West Texas Intermediate crude gained $5.20, or 6.56%, to $84.46 a barrel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Convicted assailant of Rushdie found guilty of terrorism charges

The man who stabbed and partially blinded author Salman Rushdie on stage at a New York arts institute in 2022 was found guilty on July 29 of federal terrorism charges stemming from the attack.

Hadi Matar, 28, was convicted of attempting to provide material support to Lebanon's Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, as well as engaging in transnational terrorism and providing material support to terrorists. A U.S. District Court jury in Buffalo, New York, returned its guilty verdict on all charges after deliberations of just two hours, capping a trial that began July 21, according to a spokesperson for federal prosecutors.

Rushdie, 79, had faced threats on his life since the 1988 publication of his novel "The Satanic Verses." Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, denounced the book as blasphemous, leading to a call for Rushdie's death, an edict known as a fatwa.

According to evidence presented at his trial, Matar spent more than a year researching the fatwa before deciding to try fulfilling the edict with an attack on Rushdie.

Matar, a U.S. citizen from Fairview, New Jersey, was found guilty of attempted murder in New York state court in 2025, and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

U.S. strikes $58.6B Patriot missile deal amid stockpile concerns

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Army awarded Lockheed Martin a contract worth up to $58.6 billion to produce Patriot interceptor missiles, the Pentagon said on July 29, as conflicts in Iran and Ukraine strain U.S. weapons stockpiles.

The United States has supplied large quantities of weapons to allies while also using munitions in its own military operations in Iran, raising concerns about inventories of key air defense and precision-guided weapons.

The Lockheed award converts a previous one-year deal worth $4.7 billion awarded in April into a seven-year draft agreement, creating a multiyear procurement plan for the interceptors from fiscal 2026 through 2032, the Army said.

Russia charges Telegram founder Durov with aiding terrorism

MOSCOW – Russia said on July 29 it had charged Telegram founder Pavel Durov with facilitating terrorist activity, alleging that his hugely popular messaging app was being used by Ukrainian spies to organize attacks inside Russia.

In response, Telegram's official account on X posted an image of the Russian-born billionaire making an obscene gesture with his middle finger.

The charges, announced by the Federal Security Service, marked the culmination of a long investigation against Dubai-based Durov and Telegram. Moscow has effectively throttled the service as part of a wider campaign to cut off access to foreign tech platforms and tighten control over the internet.

The app has been described as a "virtual battlefield" in the war between Russia and Ukraine, where it is used by officials, soldiers and influential bloggers on both sides.

2 Chinese bishops ordained in week under Vatican-Beijing deal

VATICAN CITY – The Vatican announced on July 29 the ordination of a second Chinese bishop in a week, highlighting ongoing cooperation with Beijing under a politically sensitive accord governing Catholic appointments in China.

Francis Xavier Duan Yongkun, 45, was ordained coadjutor bishop of Bameng, in China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region, after Pope Leo XIV approved his candidacy last month, the Vatican said.

The announcement came a week after the Vatican disclosed the ordination of Joseph Chang Yanfeng as bishop of Chifeng, also in Inner Mongolia, under the same arrangement.

The back-to-back appointments underscore the cautious diplomatic engagement between Beijing and the Vatican over who gets to appoint Catholic bishops in China – one of the most sensitive issues in their relationship. The provisional agreement, first signed in 2018, gives the pope the final say over bishop appointments while allowing Chinese authorities a role in proposing candidates.

Reuters

Fires spread across Europe

3 firefighters die while battling Greek blazes

Yves Herman, Nacho Doce and Lefteris Papadimas
REUTERS

A firefighting plane makes a drop amid efforts to battle a wildfire in Artana, Spain, on July 29. PEDRO NUNES/REUTERS

LE TEMPLE, France – Three Greek firefighters died battling blazes during high winds on the island of Crete and the mainland as wildfires spread across Europe on July 29 after days of devastating fires in Spain and France.

Two firefighters became trapped in the Crete blaze near the village of Krya Vrysi while they were driving between fire fronts. Another died in a separate fire in the Peloponnese region, a fire department spokesperson told Reuters.

Residents and tourists were evacuated from Krya Vrysi and other nearby villages, locals told Reuters by phone, as high winds pushed the fire out of control near popular tourism spots.

"The wind is unbelievable – you can't stand sometimes. The flames were huge, it was really scary," said resident Chrissa Gioukaki.

The flames headed southeast toward the coastal town of Agia Galini, where hotels line a hill above a small harbor. Tourists were evacuated on buses and in cars on July 29, said Charalampos Sevvas, owner of the Galini Mare hotel.

Earlier on July 29, the head of the EU's emergency response center said that Greece and Italy were set to face a heightened wildfire risk in the coming weeks.

Europe, the world's fastest-warming continent, has endured record-breaking heat waves this year, as human-driven climate change is intensifying the heat and drought that allow wildfires to spread faster.

Blazes have forced large-scale evacuations of people in Spain and France over the past days, scorching through forests and killing wildlife.

Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska warned of "three tough days" ahead, with strong winds and high temperatures, even as the major fire in the Avila and Madrid region stabilized, allowing authorities to lift some of the evacuation and shelter-in-place orders.

Officials meanwhile warned of another fire in the northwestern Spanish province of Zamora. They issued an evacuation order for six towns and asked about 1,000 people to shelter in place.

Spain's weather agency AEMET said temperatures were expected to reach 104 degrees Fahrenheit on July 29 in at least six regions, which have been placed on orange alert, the second-highest level.

In France, temperatures in the southwest, hit by devastating fires, were expected to rise from around 91 degrees on July 28 to peak at about 106, according to Meteo France, while dry winds could stoke flames.

French firefighters kept a major blaze west of Bordeaux stable overnight. And near Bordeaux's airport, which has remained open, tramway services resumed and hotels reopened.

But officials warned the wildfires were far from over. The southwestern municipality of Lege-Cap-Ferret flagged several flare-ups in the area, adding that firefighters had managed to stabilize them. In Le Temple, around 18 miles away, firefighters with trucks and hoses and supported by aircraft worked to extinguish a reigniting fire that set trees and vegetation ablaze.

"We remain vigilant of course today, considering the forecast weather conditions, with a new rise in temperatures and higher wind speeds in the afternoon," firefighter commander Matthieu Jomain told reporters earlier in the day.

The impact on the forests has been widespread. The wildfire in the Landes area west of Bordeaux has devastated 104,000 acres of mainly pine trees.

Authorities have evacuated about 220,000 people, including tourists and local residents, as the fire threatened the Cap Ferret peninsula on the Atlantic coast, only accessible by one road. About 60,000 people have been allowed back.

War

Continued from Page 1NN

fighting has now gone on for five months with no end in sight.

Joint U.S.-Saudi attacks

The joint U.S.-Saudi attacks also mark the first time Riyadh has publicly joined strikes alongside Washington.

Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, powerful Iran-backed paramilitary groups incorporated into the Iraqi security forces, said at least 20 members were killed and 32 wounded in U.S.-Saudi strikes targeting several bases across Iraq.

Iraqi men shouted Shiite sectarian slogans and "Death to America!" as they carried the bodies of slain fighters in body bags. Washington and Riyadh said they struck the Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq in retaliation for drone attacks on Saudi oil targets launched from Iraq.

It was the first major U.S. military action in the Middle East since July 24, when Trump abruptly suspended an intensive bombing campaign after 13 days. U.S. officials privately cautioned that resuming major combat operations against Iran would carry risk given the negative impact on stocks of munitions.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, estimated this week that the U.S. military has fewer than 1,000 Patriot interceptor inventories and fewer than 250 THAAD interceptors – two key air defense systems.

Though Iran denies its forces have directed strikes from Iraqi territory, Iranian newspaper Hamshahri reported that four Iranian Revolutionary Guard advisers had been killed in the strikes on Iraq.

The strikes on Iraq expose a dangerous rift in that volatile country. The Shiite-led government is one of the few in the world to balance close military and diplomatic ties with both Tehran and Washington, but those divided loyalties are a constant source of tension and frequent domestic unrest.

The office of Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi, who took power just two months ago, urged the parties involved to avoid escalation and said he wanted to keep the country out of regional conflicts.

The Iraqi presidency denounced the strikes on the paramilitaries as "an unacceptable attack and a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty," while also calling for a halt to attacks by armed groups against Iraq's neighbors.

Hours before launching the joint attacks with Saudi Arabia on Iraq, the U.S. military said its air defenses had averted a surprise Iranian attack on U.S. troops in the region.

Jordan's military said it had shot down five Iranian missiles. U.S. bases in Jordan have lately become primary Iranian targets, where three U.S. service members were killed this month in the worst U.S. losses since March.

Iran said it had fired several ballistic missiles at U.S. military installations in Jordan, and had struck three tankers that were attempting to transit through the Strait of Hormuz along an unauthorized route.

Mall

Continued from Page 1NN

to evacuate and sirens were ringing out. Nearby roads were gridlocked, it was a state of panic," Sonoda said.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on July 29 it was a "race against time" to rescue those still trapped in the mall and others affected by the quake. Around 170 soldiers have been deployed to help with rescue operations at the site.

The mall, the biggest in the prefecture, had just reopened in June as a new and improved shopping and entertainment complex to commemorate its recovery from another deadly tremor a decade ago.

After being badly damaged in the magnitude 7.3 Kumamoto earthquake in April 2016, the operator highlighted its seismically reinforced ceilings and overall improvements to safety and resilience as part of its redevelopment.

Still, one worker manning one of the mall's 200 stores told the Yomiuri newspaper that the July 28 temblor shook the building for 10 seconds and brought him to his knees. Another 22-year-old employee at the mall's theater told the newspaper that the quake that struck around 4.30 p.m. threw up a cloud of dust, adding to the panic.

Aeon President Akio Yoshida told a news conference on July 29 that staff evacuated 3,000 shoppers within half an hour after the quake hit. But an unlucky few were inside when, 50 minutes later, the explosion occurred.

"We confirmed that all customers had been evacuated. We believed that employees had also evacuated, but it later emerged that some people had remained inside, or returned for whatever reason," Yoshida said, adding that one survivor was found injured in the bathroom.

Across the street in a pub about 330 yards from the mall, Kazuya Tsurunaga was cleaning up dishes and glasses broken by the earlier quake when he heard the deafening blast. "A large cloud of smoke was billowing up, and because the wind happened to be blowing, and the wind direction was toward the shop, it was like volcanic ash was falling around us," he told broadcaster TBS.

For the first few hours, police officers and firefighters did not enter the wreckage because of the risk of further building collapse amid a series of aftershocks, a police official said.

Video footage shot by a police officer inside the building early on July 29 showed large sections of the ceiling had collapsed, storefronts had been blown open and furniture was strewn across the floor.

All 25 cats left behind in a cat cafe during the hasty evacuation were rescued on July 29, the store owner said in a social media post, thanking rescue workers.

Some rescuers reported smelling gas, Japan's government spokesperson Minoru Kihara told a news conference on July 29.

Aeon officials said the mall used LPG [liquefied petroleum gas] rather than piped gas, pumped into the building from an outdoor storage tank. The system had undergone a safety check as recently as last month, the officials said.

The outdoor storage tank appeared intact after the blast, footage showed.

Piped gas is automatically shut off by network operators if seismic activity reaches a certain threshold or the line is damaged.

But LPG also has such safety protocols, an official with the Japan LPG sales association said. Microcomputer-controlled meters automatically shut off supply if they detect abnormalities such as leaks or pressure fluctuations, and are designed to cut supply during major seismic activity, the official said.

Yoshida said the possibility the explosion was caused by gas was "very high," but that thorough investigations were needed to understand what exactly went wrong.